The Nature of Christian Apologetics in Response to Religious Pluralism. An Analysis of the Contribution of John Hick.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the structure of Christian apologetics in a pluralist society. Two major objections to the possibility of apologetics are considered. The first objection is the non-foundationalist challenge to knowledge and we consider a number of forms in which this objection has been raised with particular focus on the work of Malcolm and Kuhn. The second objection arises with the reality of religious diversity and its attendant difficulties for such apologetic requirements as commensurability and criteria for assessing truth claims. The work of Hick is examined in some detail to assess his response to this problem. It will be shown that despite his claims, Hick's work remains foundationalist and a connection will be made between adopting a foundationalist epistemology and the pluralist hypothesis. The failure of such an epistemology is explored further by assessing the background assumptions of the Enlightenment particularly as they were embodied in the work of Kant and adopted by Hick. In contrast the claims of some critics of the Enlightenment, particularly MacIntyre and Lindbeck, are considered and their central charges against foundationalism are applied to Hick and upheld. A constructive proposal for apologetics will be made in which a particular critique of the Enlightenment is granted and the concepts of shared standards and translatability utilised in order to overcome the anti-foundationalist challenge to apologetics. The suggestions of Plantinga and Frame are considered in the light of this proposal but a further element of narrative is developed as a basic component of knowledge. In contrast to some narrativist thinking it will be argued that the narrative structure of knowledge is consistent with Christian apologetics in a pluralist society.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to Rosalyn Sinkinson for her untiring support and encouragement throughout the many long and unsociable hours that this research has demanded.

Author's Declaration

This thesis represents my own work on John Hick and apologetics under the supervision of Dr Gavin D'Costa at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, the University of Bristol. The views contained in this work are the views of the author and not those of either the University or the Department.

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Introduction

The aim of this thesis will be to discuss the nature of Christian apologetics with particular attention to the pressing problem of developing a Christian theology of religions. Apologetics is defined and discussed in Chapter 1 (a). It is used in this thesis to identify any attempt to provide justification for religious belief in the face of some perceived challenge. Much attention has been given to the role and nature of dialogue in response to pluralism.[1] Dialogue certainly includes apologetic encounter but is a broader term. In some recent literature it implies an attempt to suspend evaluation in favour of hearing and providing self-description of religious traditions.[2] For reasons that will become clear in the course of this thesis this latter implication is understood to raise complex difficulties. Therefore, the term will be avoided in favour of the narrower practice of apologetics.

We begin with a brief consideration of what apologetics entails particularly in relation to inter-religious encounter [1(a)]. The following sections survey a central problem in apologetics; namely, the existence or non-existence of grounds for belief. Malcolm provides representative criticism of the possibility of grounds [1(b)]. Kuhn's work in the philosophy of science provides a framework for both apologetic encounter and groundless belief [1(c)]. Various recent attempts to maintain foundationalist apologetics are given brief consideration and also found wanting [1(d)].

Extended consideration will then be given to the work of Hick who has attempted to provide an apologetic for Christianity but also developed a formulation of Christian thought in which it has no superior claim to express reality than any other religion.

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[1] Such as Hick 1974a, Lochhead 1988, Milbank 1990b, Newbigin 1977.
[2] Particularly in Swidler (*et. al.*) 1990.

This account will focus on his work in epistemology [2(a),(b)] rather than theology of religions because it will be argued that it is here that Hick's work is decisively flawed. Various problems in Hick's pluralist hypothesis have been detailed elsewhere but the present argument will be that his pluralist conclusions are already implicit in his account of the rationality of religious knowledge.[3] It is at the level of epistemology that Hick's work is faulted. Brief consideration of the early form of his pluralist hypothesis [2(c)] will also demand discussion of the continuity of Hick's work [2(d)]. It has been argued that the revolutions within his thinking rule out the possibility of treating it as a coherent whole. In contrast we shall argue for the clear continuity of Hick's work based on his epistemology which has remained a constant.

We shall consider Hick's apologetic for faith in the context of religious pluralism particularly as it is stated in his major articulation of the pluralist thesis: An Interpretation of Religion.[4] Here Hick develops an important distinction between faith as a general category and Christian faith [3(a)]. Hick is committed to developing an account of the former at the expense of the latter. Underlying the shift to a pluralist theology is Hick's epistemic assumption that this universe is ambiguous and that one should exercise scepticism towards religious belief [3(b)]. Hick's scepticism is a foundational assumption in his position which relativises the extent to which he may be committed to any particular beliefs. Therefore, the basic apologetic offered by

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[3] The basic claims of pluralism are not subjected to significant criticism in this thesis. Extended treatments of Hick's pluralist theology of religions include Carruthers 1990, D'Costa 1987, Gillis 1989, Loughlin 1986a, Sinkinson 1995a, Stinnett 1987. Loughlin draws attention to the basic failure running through Hick's work as his attempt to distinguish theology and experience. It is this central problem that is analysed in our present treatment of apologetics.

[4] Hick 1989a

Hick is one in defence of the reasonableness of the religious perspective in general against naturalism or materialism [3(c)].

Having outlined these major contours of Hick's epistemology we shall move to identifying the larger movement of which his is a part. The first stage of this will involve a consideration of Hick's dualist epistemology [4(a)] and its connections to the work of Kant. Two relevant aspects of Kant's work will be brought into consideration. Firstly, his epistemology as expressed primarily in The Critique of Pure Reason[5] [4(b)] and, secondly, his philosophy of religion from Religion Within the Limits of Religion Alone[6] [4(c)]. Having established this Kantian background we will consider the extent to which Hick is indebted to Kant's wider project [4(d)]. It might be objected that Hick only utilises Kant's work as illustrative of his own but we will seek to demonstrate that Hick's whole pluralist project rests upon a thoroughly Kantian epistemology.

Kant was a founding figure of the Modernist period in western intellectual history otherwise known as the Enlightenment. The nature of the Enlightenment will be identified [5(a)] and Hick's position located within it. The reason for this description of Hick is to provide a basis for an evaluation of the kind of apologetic strategy his position commends. We shall outline Hick's reductionist treatment of language [5(b)] coupled with his mistaken unravelling of the relationship between experience and language [5(c)]. Both of these failings are direct consequences of his Enlightenment inheritance. In contrast, a much more positive account of the role of religious

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[5] Kant 1993 [1781]. Of the two further critiques, Kant 1978 [1788] and Kant 1973 [1790], it it is this one that receives by far the most of Hick's attention.
[6] Kant 1960 [1793]

language will be considered [5(d)]. This provides a basis for an alternative apologetic to the dominant foundationalist model.

The final chapter is concerned with developing the alternative apologetic. This alternative presents the possibility of Christian apologetics without commitment to the foundational role of a tradition-transcending epistemology. At this point a basic contrast is drawn between Hick's non-revelatory account of religious knowledge and apologetics based on revelation [6(a),(b)]. Various writers have offered forms of apologetics consistent with a non-foundational description of religious knowledge. Some of these suggestions will be drawn upon to present this alternative [6(c)] and in the final section we shall draw together the strengths of such an apologetic and address some of the objections that arise with respect to the empirical reality of religious pluralism [6(d)]. Christian apologetics presupposes God's revelation in Scripture as constitutional of the Christian tradition and for this reason not to be subjected to an independent conception of rationality. Therefore, it is the narrative of God's self-revelation that must form the basis for the identity of Christianity and the basis of apologetics. In the light of this, apologetics are communal in form not reliant on particular individuals, such as the philosopher, alone. The conclusion of our thesis is that correct apologetics are the public expression by the community of God's people of the story God tells in Scripture.

Chapter 1 Varieties of Apologetics

(a) The Necessity of Apologetics

Meanings

The English word "apologetics" is derived from the Greek "*apologeomai*" that means to speak in defence. As used in 1 Peter 3:15 it indicates the practice of making a reply to non-believers who question the reason for Christians adhering to the hope of the Christian gospel. Apologetics has become a discipline in itself and may be distinguished from the *ad hoc* sense in which *apologia* is used in the Biblical writings:

> Whereas the word apology denotes a particular defence of the Christian faith, apologetics is the working out and presentation of intellectual, scientific and philosophical arguments which may underlie such an apology.[1]

The discipline of apologetics has held an important place in the history of Christian thought. Richardson describes this position as mainstream in Church history:

> Theologians of the highest rank, such as Origen, Augustine and Aquinas, are also the Church's leading apologists. A surprisingly large proportion of the first book of Calvin's Institutes is devoted to apologetic and proof from reason: the young humanist scholar of the Renaissance who became the leader of the Reformation never misses an opportunity of pointing out the errors of classical humanism.[2]

However, as Richardson also points out, apologetics has been the target of direct hostility within the Church. Notable rejections of apologetics are to be found in the work of Luther and Barth.[3] We shall consider a number of possible objections to apologetics from more recent philosophy in the remainder of this chapter. The

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[1] Brown (ed.) 1986 p.51
[2] Richardson 1960 p.22
[3] For a historical survey of the Christian assessment of apologetics see McGrath 1992. Dulles 1971 and Ramm 1965.

definition of apologetics that we may isolate here is the presentation of Christian faith, belief and behaviour in response to rival traditions. Griffiths provides a useful statement of what he terms the Necessity of Inter-religious Apologetics (NOIA) principle that expresses this apologetic role:

> If representative intellectuals belonging to some specific religious community come to judge at a particular time that some or all of their own doctrine-expressing sentences are incompatible with some alien religious claim(s), then they should feel obliged to engage in both positive and negative apologetics vis-a-vis these alien religious claim(s) and their promulgators.[4]

Griffiths distinguishes here between two forms of apologetic procedure. Positive apologetics is the presentation of a Christian truth claim to a non-believer. Negative apologetics is a defensive reply to an objection raised by a non-believer. We may identify three presuppositions necessary in order to practise apologetics of either form. These presuppositions underlie the form of doctrine-expressing sentences that Griffiths is concerned with. If these three presuppositions are not sustainable then apologetics of this form is not possible.

Three Presuppositions of Apologetics

The first presupposition is that it must be possible to identify at least some doctrine-expressing sentences which are both comprehensible to and considered false by people not belonging to the tradition in which they are promoted.[5] Different ideas, beliefs, theories and statements of the nature of some shared concern (normally described as "reality" or some similar expression) must be in some way contradictory. After various cultural, linguistic and contextual factors are taken into account there must remain some residue of belief that genuinely represents an opposing point of view. If

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[4] Griffiths 1991 p.3. See further 1990b
[5] Griffiths 1991 pp.21-26

conflicting truth claims cannot be comprehended then apologetics is unnecessary. Christian has provided a detailed discussion of the principle of non-contradiction in formulating religious doctrines and their implications for behaviour and practice:

> Two doctrines are opposed if they cannot be accepted jointly without absurdity. To accept a doctrine which recommends a course of action is to undertake to do what is recommended. So two such doctrines are opposed if no one could undertake both courses of action without absurdity.[6]

Christian argues that the truth value of religious claims are not solely an internal affair within the tradition in which they are stated and promoted. He is aware that doctrines, creeds and scriptures should not be treated as if their *primary* intention were to contradict rival religious truth claims. Furthermore, he notes that *different* doctrines or visions of life are not necessarily contradictory:

> On the contrary, the main point of the doctrines of a religion is to say something positive about the meaning of life ..... the doctrines of a religion themselves are generated by a certain vision of life .... Thus oppositions of doctrines are derivative and consequential; they are twice removed from those particular experiences and activities which are existentially primary in religion.[7]

Contradicting rival truth claims is not the primary purpose of articulating religious belief. However, this does not imply that conflicting truth claims are of no consequence. Oppositions of religious doctrines are a profound reality despite their secondary rather than primary status.[8]

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[6] Christian 1972 p.2 (cf. Christian 1968 and 1993)

[7] Christian 1972 p.15

[8] DiNoia has argued that the very different visions of life offered by various religions mean that they are not necessarily in a state of opposition (DiNoia 1990b and developed further in DiNoia 1992). He argues that those lifestyles may be very different and yet not incompatible with Christian salvation. This possibility is beyond the scope of our present considerations but does not affect the fact of conflicting truth claims when a religion expresses its doctrinal framework in a conceptual form.

The second presupposition required to sustain the possibility of apologetics is that there must be doctrine-expressing sentences that have significance which extends beyond the bounds of the community in which they are articulated.[9] This is implied by the first presupposition. To identify examples of conflicting truth claims some form of mutual understanding must be possible. The place in which this point of contact is to be sought will be the language in which those beliefs are expressed as it is in language that apologetics will be conducted. However, not only must linguistic elements be shared but also some sense of what constitutes a valid or invalid argument. This latter requirement is implicit in the possibility of any overlap in language use:

> And since there is an intimate link between the natural language used by a given religious community and the argument-forms and belief-forming practices used by that community, it is surely not surprising that a good deal of mutual comprehensibility obtains between two religious communities that use natural languages belonging to the same family.[10]

Where there is less common language shared by alternative communities there will be an increased possibility that shared rational principles will not be available. Contradiction is itself a logical principle and, therefore, the ability to identify conflicting truth claims demands some shared logical principles in which that contradiction may be stated. The practice of apologetics relies upon some sense of shared rationality because argument itself, whether positive or negative in form, cannot hope to be effective without some common principles to which appeal may be made.

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[9] Griffiths 1991 pp.27-31
[10] Griffiths 1991 p.29

The third presupposition is the thread which draws the previous two together and provides perhaps the most controversial element of apologetics. This is the assumption that doctrine-expressing sentences have cognitive content concerning a reality that is in some way distinct from those sentences.[11] This presupposition provides the basis for sentences being declared true or false and capable of providing knowledge about reality. Griffiths informs us that the kind of doctrinal statements that necessitate apologetics are those where: "the knowledge so produced is of a universal kind: it must extend beyond the bounds of the community that produced it."[12] Griffiths is not claiming that all doctrine-expressing sentences must have this universal or objective intention. It may be that some have only an intra-systematic rule function but the overall impact of doctrine-expressing sentences will be to tell us something about the way reality is that applies to all people everywhere.[13]

The Rejection of Apologetics

Each of these three presuppositions are characteristics of apologetics in interreligious dialogue. However, major difficulties have been raised with each of these presuppositions. These difficulties, which we shall examine in due course, do not seem so significant in traditional apologetic works. This is because much traditional apologetics is pursued on the assumption that the field of debate is the interface between Christians, atheists, Jews and Muslims.[14] This is an area of broad cultural, linguistic and rational overlap. However, in the light of religious pluralism profound

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[11] Griffiths 1991 pp.31-36
[12] Griffiths 1991 p.31
[13] Griffiths 1991 p.39-44
[14] For example, Plantinga 1990, Richardson 1960, Van Til 1976 (Here, the debate is construed primarily as an internal dialogue between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism). See also D'Costa 1992 for a discussion of this as the general plight of systematic theology of which we may construe apologetics to be one part.

problems are raised for the attempt to maintain these presuppositions. Indeed, a major objection to apologetics has been raised by various forms of non-foundationalism. This thesis will propose that there is much validity in the non-foundationalist critique of apologetics. This will be seen most clearly when we apply the critique to the analysis of pluralism offered by Hick. This conclusion calls for a revision rather than a rejection of apologetics.

It is noted at this point that apologetics is being considered as a branch of *either* theology or philosophy. This is simply a result of the empirical fact that something purporting to be apologetics has been offered either as a philosophical or as a theological proposal. For this reason our consideration of apologetics will demand a lengthy discussion of various epistemologies. This is not to determine our conclusion as to whether a properly Christian apologetic should construe epistemology as foundational.[15]

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[15] Recent work, generally categorised as postmodern, subverts the necessity of an epistemology. Bernstein surveys this work and identifies a coherent strand that argues for the need to go beyond the polarisation of objectivism and relativism. In order to make this step he argues that it is necessary to usurp the foundational status given to philosophy in contemporary thought (Bernstein 1983). These conclusions are now compelling a revision of the nature of apologetics (i.e. Kenneson 1995). Feminist theology has provided a sustained critique of the status given to conceptual schemes and epistemologies. McCarthy reviews the relevant literature in order to sustain her claim that the essentially male concern with conceptual thought has created a stumbling block for interreligious dialogue (McCarthy 1996). Though this theme is not our present concern it is noted that Jantzen describes the postmodern tradition of thought as offering a way forward in unmasking hidden assumptions and acknowledging the role of gender, tradition and faith in religious knowledge (Jantzen 1996).

(b) The Groundlessness of Belief

Malcolm's Argument

Malcolm has provided an important argument for the groundlessness of religious belief.[1] Following Wittgenstein,[2] he notes that a child's knowledge rests upon trust in the truthfulness of adults. Trust has a primary place in the child's epistemic apparatus; doubt and scepticism develop later. Malcolm suggests that this relationship between trust and doubt remains true in the case of adult belief. For example, he argues that the belief "material things .... do not cease to exist without some physical explanation" is an example of a fundamental belief that we have no option but to trust.[3] It is not a belief that we arrive at through the weight of evidence. This belief is held to be true in spite of the fact that for everyone some material things do *seem* to disappear out of existence from time to time. We describe this eventuality as mislaying or losing an item but, according to Malcolm, there would be no evidence to prevent another culture believing that objects really do cease to exist without physical cause:

> If we compare their view that material things do sometimes go out of existence, inexplicably, with our own rejection of that view, it does not appear to me that one position is supported by *better evidence* than is the other. Each position is compatible with ordinary experience.[4]

The belief Malcolm is using as an example is, therefore, not a belief arrived at by experiment and open to refutation by experiment. Rather, it is described by Malcolm as "an unreflective part of the framework within which physical investigations are made."[5] We shall describe these assumptions as "presuppositions" because they are

[1] Malcolm 1977
[2] Particularly Wittgenstein 1958 and 1975.
[3] Malcolm 1977 p.144
[4] Malcolm 1977 p.145
[5] Malcolm 1977 p.145

beliefs presupposed in a framework or world view. According to Malcolm, the process of apologetic debate only occurs within a framework:

> Verification, justification, the search for evidence, occur *within* a system. The framework propositions of the system are not put to the test, not backed up by the evidence.[6]

This suggests an important set of limitations for apologetics. Malcolm claims that rational justification can only occur within the framework created by presuppositions. It then follows that the presuppositions would not themselves be open to justification or proof because they are the system in which justification and proof is made possible.

Implications for Apologetics

If Malcolm is correct then presuppositions cannot be adopted on the grounds that they have evidential warrant or are rationally persuasive. This raises the question of how, then, one does come to regard certain presuppositions as correct or true:

> We grow into a framework. We don't question it .... We accept it trustingly. But this acceptance is not a consequence of reflection. We do not decide to accept framework propositions.[7]

According to Malcolm, holding a presupposition to be true is not the result of reason or will. Rather, it is the passive result from being part of a community. Being a part of a community means believing framework presuppositions and this is "pressed upon us" by our circumstances, not chosen by our will.[8]

Malcolm objects to the dominant evidentialist epistemology of western culture. The basic tenet of evidentialism is that one is only justified in holding a particular belief to

[6] Malcolm 1977 p.146
[7] Malcolm 1977 p.147
[8] Malcolm 1977 p.147

be true if one does so on the basis of evidence. Malcolm marshals a number of examples demonstrating that we do not always believe something because of something else. For example, people do not infer that they are in pain from previous occasions of being in pain. Evidentialism proposes reasons or rules for behaviour and thought. These "intermediaries" connect something we believe or do with something that prompts us to believe or behave as we do. Rules of logic or inference, deductivism and inductivism, are proposed intermediaries between the two. But, Malcolm urges, such an intermediary cannot do the job it is designed for:

> It cannot fill the epistemological gap. It cannot provide the bridge of justification. It cannot put to rest the How-do-we-know? question. Why not? Because it cannot tell us how *it itself* is to be taken, understood.[9]

Rules or principles of rationality are neither self-justifying nor self-interpreting. Therefore, the process of appealing to another principle in order to perform epistemic justification or hermeneutic interpretation leads to an infinite regress. Malcolm argues that a point must be reached when the thinker will "have to do something on his own, without guidance."[10] This is the point of groundlessness where behaviour or belief are adopted without grounds.[11]

The implications of Malcolm's argument are that the possibilities for justification must be limited to a framework of thought. It is impossible to justify the framework

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[9] Malcolm 1977 p.151
[10] Malcolm 1977 p.151
[11] Bartley is right to note that in Malcolm's work "Scientific and religious frameworks are on a par here" but it is unfair for him to draw the implication that "Malcolm says nothing of the critical examination of frameworks, and clearly believes it to be impossible" (Bartley 1984 p.103 n.53). The point Malcolm is making is not that such a critical examination is impossible but that it is not a critical examination that can be undertaken by theoretical, philosophical appraisal. Bartley is too confident of the range to which philosophy can apply. Malcolm is taking seriously knowledge in its sociological, psychological and historical perspective.

itself. Religion is, in this sense, groundless - something we grow into rather than something we believe on the grounds of something else. Nonetheless, people do attempt to offer evidences for Christian belief designed to appeal beyond the Christian framework. Malcolm describes this as a kind of prejudice - we mask beliefs that we are persuaded of through non-rational sources with an unwarranted universal, rational validity. This mask "obscures from us the *human* aspect of our concepts - the fact that what we call 'a reason', 'evidence', 'explanation', 'justification', is what appeals to and satisfies *us*."[12]

Malcolm is proposing the radical thesis that there can be no apologetic between frameworks, only within them. Because presuppositions have no grounds, no grounds need be appealed to in order to justify them. In responding to Malcolm, Lyas points out an important ambiguity in Malcolm's essay. Is Malcolm arguing that religious frameworks need not be justified or, the more radical thesis, that such frameworks cannot be justified?[13] There is an ambiguity in Malcolm's work but his actual argument on this point is clear: presuppositions are not possible subjects for justification because they themselves provide the framework in which any justification must occur.

The implications of Malcolm's argument certainly undermine the NOIA principle. If justification is not related to evidence of any sort then one may question whether the beliefs in question are related to an objective, independent reality of any sort. In other words, the realist conception of knowing is at stake.[14] Furthermore, if

[12] Malcolm 1977 p.154
[13] Lyas 1977 p.161
[14] However, it does not follow that the non-realist conclusion must follow. Keightley seems to think that, following the work of D.Z.Phillips, Wittgenstein's position does imply this (Keightley 1976). However, Thiselton notes approvingly that Keightley

presuppositions are non-realist in status and arrived at through living in a community rather than on the basis of grounds then this suggests that framework beliefs are the product of culture. These two implications suggest the redundancy of apologetics. Not only is it impossible to rationally persuade someone of the truth of a presupposition that they do not already hold but, also, such a practice is strictly pointless. There is nothing at issue between frameworks other than belonging to different communities.[15] Attempts at such persuasion would be the epistemic equivalent of persuading someone that their favourite colour was less 'correct' than one's own. No one can choose between them, they are constitutive of what we are. Such an argument leads to the conclusion that apologetics is both impossible and pointless.[16]

This radical conclusion need not follow this argument. We shall now consider another theoretical account of the role of a framework and of presuppositions in knowledge which does not exclude the possibility of apologetics.

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also recognises that the Wittgensteinian approach "moves back beyond the distinction between the wholly 'objective' and the purely 'subjective'." (Thiselton 1980 p.379). Malcolm's argument brings the realist conception into doubt but does not necessarily leave us with epistemic ignorance or scepticism.

[15] This is why Phillips criticises Van Til for claiming that Christianity must have "a religious *explanation*" of rival moralities (Phillips 1988 p.106). Phillips endorses the recognition of difference between traditions but denies that any tradition should apply its differences as if they were universally valid.

[16] Küng, in a work that offers one of the most substantial traditional apologetics for Christianity, seems to share affinities with the Wittgensteinian tradition in his treatment of fundamental trust in religious knowledge (Küng 1991 pp.569-583). However, he rebukes the neo-Wittgensteinians such as Malcolm for using the language games model for religious traditions as a *fait accompli*. It settles the apologetic questions too easily.

(c) Paradigm Shifts and Paradigm Truth

Paradigms

In the philosophy of science Kuhn has charted the history of scientific research in a way that complements the anti-foundationalist thought of Malcolm.[1] Kuhn has argued that the development of science cannot be accurately pictured in terms of the gradual accumulation of discoveries. Instead, science undergoes revolutions as one picture of the world is replaced by another. These revolutions are characterised by Kuhn as paradigm shifts. They have become increasingly recognisable features of western intellectual history since the seventeenth century: "the successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution is the usual developmental pattern of mature science".[2] The very process of becoming a scientist involves coming to adopt the dominant paradigm of thought as one's own:

> [Scientists] never learn concepts, laws, and theories in the abstract and by themselves. Instead, these intellectual tools are from the start encountered in a historically and pedagogically prior unit that displays them with and through their applications.[3]

The rules and laws that scientists use along with their tools are all dependent on the prior paradigm from which they are derived. This paradigm involves a network of commitments to which the scientist must adhere. Only through a paradigm is anyone able to encounter and describe the world. Consequently, even our knowledge of and relationship to the world is dependent upon a paradigm: "though the world does not

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[1] Reference will be to the second edition of The Structures of Scientific Revolutions which includes the postscript (Kuhn 1970a). The challenge of anti-foundationalism has been felt across all disciplines in recent years. This broad movement has been carefully charted in Bernstein 1983.

[2] Kuhn 1970a p12

[3] Kuhn 1970a p.46

change with a change of paradigm, the scientist afterward works in a different world."[4] However, in another sense, Kuhn means that the world really does change when a paradigm changes because he argues that there is no neutral language in which "the world" could be described. This may be demonstrated in Kuhn's description of what occurs when a community undergoes a paradigm change.

Paradigm Choice

Kuhn underlines the 'total' character of a paradigm change. Aspects of a new paradigm are not incorporated into the old: "Like the choice between competing political institutions, that between competing paradigms proves to be a choice between incompatible modes of community life."[5] The incompatibility of paradigms is deeply significant. It implies that there can be no logical system, no rules, no language, no "reality" and no foundations that provide continuity between paradigms. This suggests that apologetics cannot be used with regard to paradigm choice:

> When paradigms enter, as they must, into a debate about paradigm choice, their role is necessarily circular. Each group uses its own paradigm to argue in that paradigm's defense.[6]

These kinds of arguments are circular because, as we have noted, paradigms are prior to rules or laws concerning the justification of belief. Therefore, both the nature of rationality and what counts as evidence is determined by the paradigm in which arguments are put forward. There is no neutral court of appeal. There is no common element in thought or experience to which a practitioner of one paradigm might appeal in the paradigm of another: "Practising in different worlds, the two groups of scientists see different things when they look from the same point in the same

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[4] Kuhn 1970a p.121
[5] Kuhn 1970a p.94
[6] Kuhn 1970a p.94

direction."[7] According to Kuhn there are no simple rational principles that arbitrate between disputants in the great scientific debates. When it is paradigms that are at stake a host of non-rational factors must be taken into account. Consequently, Kuhn does not see the process of paradigm choice being conducted through simple rational argument:

> Just because it is a transition between incommensurables, the transition between competing paradigms cannot be made a step at a time, forced by logic and neutral experience. Like the gestalt switch, it must occur all at once .... or not at all.[8]

The process of paradigm choice leading to a change of paradigm is characterised as conversion. Such a description is entirely in keeping with Kuhn's general thesis that the history of science is a history of revolutions, not of progress. The process of transition from one paradigm to another will involve a number of conversions but will also depend upon older, more resistant adherents of the previous paradigm dying out. Paradigm change involves this act of the will and for those unwilling to change only their death will see the end of their paradigm.

Implications for Apologetics

It would seem that if Kuhn's description of paradigm shifts is true for the history of science, and true for the history of intellectual enquiry as a whole, then the possibility of apologetics is undermined. Kuhn's analysis extends a similar central theme to that which we have discussed in Malcolm's work. The frameworks in which people conduct their rational thought, even the great scientific paradigms, are not themselves based on explicit rational foundations.

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[7] Kuhn 1970a p.150
[8] Kuhn 1970a p.150

Truth and Constructivism

Trigg has made strident criticism of Kuhn's position and particularly the inconsistencies he identifies underlying Kuhn's notion of a paradigm.[9] Trigg's own argument is that when one rejects the possibility of "theory-neutral" description the result is the danger that "one's grip on reality is completely broken, and there seems no way of rationally deciding between theories."[10] Trigg argues that this danger is ever present in Kuhn's position. He describes the fundamental problem in the positions of both Kuhn and Feyerabend as being the fact "that they did not have any clear notion of anything external to the system."[11] Trigg charges Kuhn with being a constructivist. Kuhn is a constructivist because he fails to distinguish between reality as it is in itself and social-scientific constructions of reality. However, Trigg is unable to consistently level this charge against Kuhn. This is partly because Kuhn is not entirely clear on the ontological significance of paradigm discoveries and partly because Trigg misunderstands Kuhn's position. This will be demonstrated with reference to Trigg's most extended treatment of Kuhn's work.[12]

Kuhn describes a paradigm as providing the basis for the formulation of rules and laws in scientific practice.[13] Because a paradigm precedes rules, adherence to it must

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[9] Kuhn's work has, of course, been widely debated in the philosophy of science, a good selection of which is assembled in Lakatos and Musgrave 1970. A detailed discussion of the development of Kuhn's position is found in Bernstein 1983 pp.51-108. Ramifications for theology are discussed in Godlove 1989 and Huyssteen 1989.

[10] Trigg 1989 p.61

[11] Trigg 1989 p.98

[12] Trigg 1973 p.99-118. See also Trigg 1983 and Trigg 1989.

[13] Huyssteen notes a development in Kuhn's use of the term paradigm. Primarily a paradigm is a problem solving model through which scientists approach nature but, more broadly, "it began to include the totality of a researcher's basic commitments and metaphysical premises" (Huyssteen 1989 p.50). The term "disciplinary matrix" was

be the result of non-rational factors. Hence, the history of science is crucial for our understanding of what science actually is. The history of science must be described in terms of sociology or psychology rather than the progressive application of universal rational standards. For this reason Kuhn's work is described as historicist.[14] This implies that the role of commitment and acts of will must precede the application of rules in determining the adoption of a paradigm. It is with this distinction between commitment and reason that Trigg takes issue.

Reason and Reality

Trigg is hostile to Kuhn's position because he understands him to have abandoned the possibility that rational standards might arbitrate between rival views: "the question whether to adopt the new paradigm is not one which, according to Kuhn, could be settled by rational considerations."[15] Yet, as Trigg points out, Kuhn's work is littered with references to being "on the right track", scientists being "reasonable men" and even that there are "many reasons why there can be no criterion" that decides between paradigms.[16] These statements suggest that either Trigg is wrong to describe Kuhn's notion of paradigm choice as necessarily arbitrary or Kuhn is simply unable to consistently maintain such a notion.

Trigg also highlights the connection that Kuhn severs between theory and reality. In effect, Kuhn's account of theory swallows up any notion of reality independent of theory. Therefore, truth cannot be at issue when one is choosing between paradigms. In fact, to understand a theory is to adhere to a theory - nothing else remains to make

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introduced to distinguish this broader meaning. For my purposes "paradigm" is used to denote the broader sense of Kuhn's use.

[14] Huyssteen p.49

[15] Trigg 1973 p.104

[16] The references here are to Kuhn 1970a p.158 and p.169 respectively.

any further claim on our adherence (i.e. the truth of the theory): "Kuhn still hankers after the view that to understand a theory fully must be to subscribe to it".[17] To understand a concept requires an act of commitment to the paradigm on which that concept depends for its meaning and validity. Trigg suggests that the result is that "we would be in the Wittgensteinian position of not being able to understand fully (if at all) those who disagree with us."[18]

However, Trigg points out that neither of the radical conclusions he attributes to Kuhn are consistently maintained in his work. The possibility that reason only operates within a paradigm and the possibility that truth is only ever defined by a paradigm implies a loss of intercontextual objectivity that Kuhn is unwilling to dispense with in practice. Concerning Kuhn's description of scientists as "reasonable men" and those who fail to shift position from an old paradigm to a new as "unreasonable" Trigg demands:

> Kuhn should make up his mind. Either a change of paradigm is subject to reason or it is not. If it is, then it is possible to talk in terms of 'arguments', and of scientists being 'reasonable' .... In that case, however, some arguments will be better than others ....[19]

Trigg presents the problem in Kuhn's work as a clear dichotomy. Either there are paradigm independent criteria of reasonableness or there are not and if the latter is the case then one "must completely rule out all talk of reasonableness and of

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[17] Trigg 1973 p.102

[18] Trigg 1973 p.104. This gives rise to the problem Kuhn described as incommensurability (see Huyssteen 1989 pp.57-60) which is, in effect, the impossibility of communication and apologetic encounter between paradigms. Kuhn explicitly denies that incommensurability is equivalent to incomparability in Kuhn 1972 p.195 (cf. Bernstein 1983 pp.82-86).

[19] Trigg 1973 p.105

arguments."[20] Clearly, Kuhn does not rule out such talk and therefore, argues Trigg, he is profoundly inconsistent. Trigg claims that to maintain the possibility of rationality depends upon the availability of objective, neutral evidence:

> What is at issue is whether it is possible to talk of scientists making a rational choice between theories. Unless one can conceive of nature independently of any theory and one can see how well or how badly a particular theory fits neutral data, such a choice must be logically impossible."[21]

Trigg's objections arise from his premiss that to maintain rationality requires that one maintain a form of cognitive realism. In Kuhn's work he identifies a radical critique of the possibility of realism and, in its place, the offer of a weak form of constructivism. If Trigg is accurate in his interpretation then the tradition represented by Kuhn and Malcolm has no place for apologetics. If rational argument with the intent to persuade is not possible between paradigms then the apologetic enterprise is not an option for those who inhabit a paradigm (and all people do inhabit paradigms). However, Trigg's objections impose an unhelpful dichotomy upon Kuhn's conclusions demanding either neutral standards or loss of objectivity. It is possible to understand Kuhn to be pursuing a third option that critiques the notion of neutral standards without adopting the non-realist or anti-realist position. It is this third option that does present a model for apologetics.

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[20] Trigg 1973 p.105. Even if Kuhn were to adopt the latter position it is unclear how he could possibly make the rule Trigg requires. Trigg's dichotomy offers a choice between independent criteria and absolute relativism. Anyone adopting the latter option has, by definition, abdicated the right to make the kind of context independent rule Trigg demands.

[21] Trigg 1973 pp.108-109

The Sociology of Knowledge

Kuhn emphasises the human element in all knowledge. A main aim of his work is to dismantle the myth of science as a progressive discipline responding by reason alone to the bare facts of the natural world. His notion of a paradigm presents an alternative picture of the history of science in which its development is revolutionary rather than progressive. The reason why this picture is so compelling with regard to the history of ideas in general and so pertinent to our treatment of religious apologetics in particular is that Kuhn draws our attention to the "total" nature of a paradigm in the scientists' life:

> All of this may seem more reasonable if we again remember that neither scientists nor laymen learn to see the world piecemeal or item by item. Except when all the conceptual and manipulative categories are prepared in advance - e.g., for the discovery of an additional transuranic element or for catching sight of a new house - both scientists and laymen sort out whole areas together from the flux of experience.[22]

Religious beliefs also exist within much wider epistemic frameworks (religions) in which they are given their meaning and their justification. Any religious world view shares these fundamental features with any scientific world view. Interestingly, Kuhn characterises paradigm shifts as "conversions".[23] When a Ptolemaic astronomer abandoned his or her previous paradigm in favour of the Copernican paradigm they did not simply drop a few beliefs and adopt some new ones. They underwent a conversion to an entirely new way of looking at the universe in which they lived. It was a conversion rather than a modification of opinion. Similarly, if a Christian were to become a Muslim it would not simply indicate that a few beliefs, however important, about the identity of Mohammed or Jesus had changed. Such a conversion

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[22] Kuhn 1970a p.128
[23] Kuhn 1970a p.152

constitutes a total shift in world view. In Kuhn's terms this conversion is a paradigm shift. Such a shift is nothing less than a change of 'world'.

To describe conversion in these total terms suggests to Trigg that the connection between belief and reality has been lost. In fact, even in this early work Kuhn maintains that it is the world, or nature, with which science deals:

> Practicing in different worlds, the two groups of scientists see different things when they look from the same point in the same direction. Again, that is not to say that they can see anything they please. Both are looking at the world, and what they look at has not changed.[24]

Kuhn argues that the words "world" or "reality" lack meaning or relevance outside of a paradigm and, thus, it is pointless to state some form of the correspondence argument such as "the notion, explicit or implicit, that changes of paradigm carry scientists and those who learn from them closer and closer to the truth."[25] The problem in such a notion is that "the truth" lacks meaning outside of a paradigm in which truth is defined and described:

> There is, I think, no theory-independent way to reconstruct phrases like 'really there'; the notion of a match between the ontology of a theory and its 'real' counterpart in nature now seems to me illusive in principle.[26]

Even Kuhn's own work expresses conclusions from within a particular paradigm of reality and truth. However, it does not follow that Kuhn would be happy with a distinction between "how Kuhn conceives reality" and "what reality is really like". His point is that such distinctions are meaningless. One's paradigm-dependent perception

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[24] Kuhn 1970a p.150
[25] Kuhn 1970a p.170
[26] Kuhn 1970a p.206

of reality is all that one has but there is a further element in Kuhn's work which prevents the radical anti-realist conclusion being drawn from this.[27]

Anomaly

This further element is the motivation for scientific discovery and the force behind paradigm change. Problem solving is the task of science and recognising problems causes scientists to extend their theories. Normal science throws up anomalies that must be explained:

> Discovery commences with the awareness of anomaly, i.e., with the recognition that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science. It then continues with a more or less extended exploration of the area of anomaly.[28]

The possibility of an anomaly requires that there must be an underlying distinction between nature and world view. The resolution of an anomaly is not complete until "the scientist has learned to see nature in a different way".[29] Clearly, problem solving depends upon a form of realism in which reality is not determined by theory. Yet, though theory cannot determine reality, we cannot speak of reality apart from the paradigm in which 'reality' is identified. The existence of anomalies is only possible

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[27] Rorty is critical of Kuhn on this point. He suggests that Kuhn had been misled by the "Kantian notion that the only substitute for a realistic account of the successful mirroring was an idealistic account of the malleability of the mirrored world." (Rorty 1979 p.325) Rorty takes a step further than Kuhn to dispense with epistemology altogether because he considers the concept of realism (and the subjective-objective distinction) to be a mistake. He argues that the only meaningful criteria for truth is the pragmatic one (cf. Rorty 1991 p.37-41). Rorty's use of Kuhn is a plausible secularist extrapolation of his work but not suitable for our own interests in this thesis. In what follows we shall emphasise elements of Kuhn's analysis which do assume a form of realism.

[28] Kuhn 1970a p.53

[29] Kuhn 1970a p.53

if paradigms do relate to an objective order: "Paradigms provide all phenomena except anomalies with a theory-determined place in the scientists field of vision."[30]

Furthermore, anomalies cannot always be solved from within a paradigm. This creates the main impetus toward paradigm shift. An accumulation of crises will lead to the abandonment of a paradigm in favour of one that is better able to solve the problems. However, even this process is a shift from one paradigm to another, rather than a stepping back from paradigms altogether:

> The decision to reject one paradigm is always simultaneously the decision to accept another, and the judgment leading to that decision involves the comparison of both paradigms with nature *and* with each other.[31]

It is important to note the abiding commitment to a form of realism underlying Kuhn's work. He does not deny that there is a reality, a problem producing reality, to which paradigms are related. But the revolution involved in paradigm change is not simply one of seeing inadequacies in a theory and creating new, more accurate theories about reality. Paradigm shifts occur when a rival paradigm proves better able to respond to crises than another. This is an important component of Kuhn's description because it draws attention to the necessity of pursuing intellectual enquiry through a paradigm. It is not possible to reason or enquire without the framework provided by a paradigm, Even in the shift between paradigms there is no neutral mid-way position open for an interim period of thought. Paradigm shifts demand the transferral of allegiance from one paradigm to another.

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[30] Kuhn 1970a p.97
[31] Kuhn 1970a p.77

Paradigm Apologetics

Despite Trigg's objections to Kuhn's account we do see traces of an apologetic enterprise at work. Though Kuhn's position, like Malcolm's, rejects the possibility of providing foundations for belief that are not themselves dependent on belief, nonetheless Kuhn maintains that paradigms must be successful in problem-solving. A process of testing is possible in which a paradigm must deal with reality or nature that stands over and against the paradigm.

Malcolm and Kuhn have both raised serious difficulties for the three presuppositions of apologetics. Regarding the existence of conflicting truth claims both writers lay a stress upon the intellectual context (scientific or religious) of such language use as distinct from other possible contexts in which alien languages might share common concerns. According to Malcolm, Christian religious discourse must be seen as *sui generis* and, as incommensurable with other language games, unable to be stated in the context of another discourse. Conflicting truth claims of the type significant for apologetic concern can only occur if Christian discourse can be stated in such wider contexts. Kuhn does allow for the possibility of rival scientific discourse but not for conflicting "truth" claims as such because, according to his thesis, there is no shared "truth" to cause disagreement and give rise to debate.[32] The second requirement for apologetics was the possibility of communication. Here, Kuhn and Malcolm describe *difficulty* rather than *impossibility*. According to Kuhn's later response to the critics of his major work: "what the participants in a communication breakdown can do is recognise each other as members of different language communities and then become

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[32] Kuhn 1970a p.206

translators."[33] Kuhn points to such features as shared everyday vocabularies and this clearly demonstrates that he is not propounding some form of the strong incommensurability thesis.[34] The third presupposition finds the most strident rejection of all: the necessity of shared rational principles. Neither Malcolm nor Kuhn recognise the existence of common rational principles that are not part of distinct traditions of thought. However, from this brief examination we may suggest that the absence of common rational principles need not preclude the practice of apologetics. This is a contentious point and in the next section this point will be discussed further.

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[33] Kuhn 1970a p.202. This resolution of incommensurability is developed in another context in MacIntyre 1988 especially pp.370-388. This is discussed in this present thesis Chapter 5 (a).

[34] Kuhn accepts the parallel Popper draws between paradigms and languages along with the further implication that translation is possible but describes the difficulty of translation resulting from the fact that "languages cut up the world in different ways, and we have no access to a neutral sub-linguistic means of reporting." (Kuhn 1972 p.196). See further Masterman 1970 and Popper 1980.

(d) Apologetics and Foundationalism

A basic component of apologetic engagement is some sense in which the claims of religious knowledge have universal validity. This component is often justified with reference to a realist epistemology. Realism requires that one distinguish between the subjective and objective poles of knowledge. As Trigg asserts:

> A fundamental distinction must be drawn between the way the world is and what we say about it, even if we all happen to agree .... What is true and what we think is true need not coincide.[1]

Conceptual relativists,[2] he argues, object to this notion because it suggests that there must be certain truths about reality that are valid even for those among whom they are not known and not held. Their objection is that there is no such thing as objective truth because there is no universally held valid picture of reality. Instead, different communities inhabit different realities and therefore truth for one community will not be the same as truth for another.[3] The common response to this dilemma is to substantiate realism with reference to an objective set of standards for knowledge.

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[1] Trigg 1973 p.1

[2] Trigg identifies neo-Wittgensteinian thinkers as conceptual relativists including Kuhn, Winch and Phillips. He would probably also include Malcolm. We have questioned the accuracy of his treatment of Kuhn. It may also be the case that his general treatment of the neo-Wittgensteinian position is inaccurate (though Keightley 1976 offers an exposition and development of Wittgenstein that would cohere with Trigg's treatment of conceptual relativism). My purpose here is to outline conceptual relativism as a hypothetical position which would undermine apologetics rather than treat the work of any representative thinker in detail.

[3] When relativism is stated in this way it seems to fall foul of a simple objection. The conceptual relativist wishes to make an objective claim about the lack of objectivity. Hence, Trigg points out "He thus has to accept that sentences which state his thesis are apparently inconsistent with it." (Trigg 1973 p.3).

Trigg acknowledges that it is difficult to state such all-purpose criteria.[4] However, both relativism and objectivism face important difficulties. Conceptual relativism fails to provide a basis for apologetic engagement. This undermines the possibility of communication and, therefore, even stating the relativist case becomes profoundly difficult. However, for objectivists the problem is one of stating exactly what the objective standards of enquiry should be. D'Costa has charged two apologists with this failure.[5] He exposes the underlying strategy of Netland and Ward as the attempt to "Find neutral, commonly acceptable criteria which could not sensibly be rejected by any thinking adherent of any religious tradition."[6] Netland outlines ten propositions which he offers as criteria for testing the ultimate validity of any religious world view. The details of these criteria need not concern us but it is interesting that they amount to no more than the three standard philosophical descriptions of truth; truth as correspondence, truth as coherence and truth as pragmatic.[7] If Netland is successful in developing a set of neutral principles then it leads to the establishment of the truth of Christianity on foundations that do not themselves depend upon the Christian faith. D'Costa remarks that it is odd that Netland, being a Christian, should be so willing to prioritise rational principles in the way that he does. Netland claims: "the reason I believe that one is justified in accepting the Christian faith as true is because it is the only worldview that satisfies the requirements of all the above criteria."[8] Two

[4] Trigg 1989 p.199

[5] D'Costa 1993a Cf. Netland 1991 and Ward 1991. Netland, from an evangelical Christian perspective, and Ward, from a pluralist perspective. The latter may not describe himself as an apologist but it will be assumed in this thesis that all attempts to confirm one's own view of Christianity and refute certain rival views is an example of apologetics. His earlier work (Ward 1982 and Ward 1984) were clear examples of an apologetic against the work of Cupitt.

[6] D'Costa 1993a p.80

[7] Netland 1991 pp.180-195. A similar proposal is found in Yandell 1984 pp.272-285 to which Netland in indebted.

[8] Netland 1991 p.193

objections may be made to this claim. First, there is a distinctively Christian objection that this apologetic relativises Christianity itself in favour of a certain logical system. Second, there is the more general anti-foundationalist claim that such criteria simply do not exist. According to Malcolm the two objections run together. For him such criteria cannot exist in principle because Christianity is self-justifying in practice. It is the latter objection that we will pursue here.

The primary problem Netland encounters in attempting to state the relevant criteria is his attempt to do so without presupposing the validity of one particular tradition. However, on examination of the principles he offers one finds that he cannot help but do exactly this. For example, consider the following two proposals for neutral criteria:

> P8: If one or more defining beliefs of R [religion] are incompatible with widely accepted and well-established moral values and principles; or if R includes among its essential practices or rites activities which are incompatible with basic moral values and practices, then there is good reason for rejecting R as false.
> P9: If the defining beliefs of R entail the denial of the objectivity of basic moral values and principles; or if they entail the denial of the objective distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, then there is good reason for rejecting R as false.[9]

Netland must rely upon the self-evidential status of such terms as "widely accepted", "well-established" and "basic" moral values in order to sustain this use of moral principles. However, this is extremely dubious in the light of religious pluralism. Such propositions leave the question of to whom the particular moral values are "well-established" or "basic".[10] D'Costa charges Netland with privileging "western secular

[9] Netland 1991 pp.189-190
[10] There is also the theological question of the significance of the fall and corrupted human nature in this analysis. This question would be a part of the first objection to the whole enterprise of developing neutral principles in support of Christian faith but

tastes and sensibilities .... current notions of good taste and decency".[11] However, it is more probable that, given the context of his argument, Netland is privileging the Christian ethical world view rather than secular western modernity. Nonetheless, in order to incorporate the terms "widely held moral belief" and "objective moral order" Netland must assume the validity of a particular context (where the relevant moral beliefs are "widely held") and, presumably, this would exclude the contexts of 1930's Nazi Germany or twelfth century France or, in fact, any place where a Biblical form of Christianity has not determined public policy and informed the habits of those who live there.

Ward attempts to describe an Archimedian point for the assessment of religious beliefs in terms of "a set of fundamental values which are given by the very nature of human being itself".[12] Having observed common features of humanity Ward seeks to root his foundational criteria in common features of what it is to be human. While accepting that many "values do differ from culture to culture" he maintains that there is "a deep value structure" that draws upon the universality of human nature.[13] The argument, consciously analogous to Kant's deduction from value, leads Ward to conclude: "Happiness is a *basic* value".[14] Happiness is left underdetermined in order to allow for the diverse particular contexts that will invest the term with content. Whatever its exact determination Ward describes happiness as a basic goal of human existence. Furthermore, in order to gain happiness one must be able to decide what actions or beliefs will lead to pleasure and to pain: "[so] rationality must also be taken as a basic

that objection is not being pursued here.
[11] D'Costa 1993a p.87
[12] Ward 1991 p.179
[13] Ward 1991 pp.180-181
[14] Ward 1991 p.182

value".[15] Ward does not specify the content of rationality and so avoids the obvious charges to be made against Netland. He prefers to describe rationality in general terms as a kind of common wisdom or sense. The exercise of this rationality requires the capacity to choose and so Ward adds freedom to his list of universal values.[16]

Whereas Netland's criteria suffered over-specification that highlighted an assumed framework of belief, Ward's criteria are under-specified and so exclude few possible frameworks. This is interesting because Netland uses his over-specified framework to justify a Christian exclusivist position while Ward uses his under-specified framework to justify a pluralist position. Both positions appear to assume the conclusion of their enquiries within their premises.

Ward restates his position in response to D'Costa by stressing his commitment to common principles of rationality.[17] Ward points out that "simple forms of reasoning"[18] are necessary to human survival and, therefore, present in all cultures. He describes these simple forms as: "self-consistency, coherence with other knowledge, and adequacy to available data."[19] These are the same basic three principles that may be discerned in Netland's ten propositions. Concerning those three principles D'Costa affirms "here Netland genuinely isolates tradition-transcending principles".[20] However, he also points out the seriously limited function of these principles pointing out that they "do not help in the task of evaluation".[21] The

[15] Ward 1991 p.183
[16] Ward 1993 p.185
[17] Ward 1994
[18] Ward 1994 p.319
[19] Ward 1994 p.320
[20] D'Costa 1993a p.84
[21] D'Costa 1993a p.84

reason for this is that these principles are only ever found in a context of belief and behaviour which will significantly modify how those principles will function. Quine, in his influential essay, provided good reason to question the *a priori* status of logical laws: "Any statement can be held true come what may, if we make drastic enough changes elsewhere in the system."[22] Quine argues against the distinction between contingent and analytic truths pointing out that analytic truths have no unique privilege in a rational framework. For any number of reasons normally classed as contingent one may suspend or seriously modify an analytic truth including that of non-contradiction.[23]

Ward rejects the idea that "one can stand on neutral ground and choose with objective dispassion between all world-views".[24] Instead, he suggest that "ultimate axioms or basic principles" must be adopted on grounds other than pure rationality.[25] This point qualifies the significance of the common principles he had been concerned to establish. The principles are now only of formal significance until invested with the resources of a particular world view. In distancing himself from the idea of neutral enquiry Ward has also undermined his attempt to establish the primacy of basic rational principles.

The central question in this discussion concerns the relationship between reason and tradition. Despite the great differences between them in theological position, Ward[26]

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[22] Quine 1972 p.65

[23] Pui-Lan identifies this feature in Asian thought in order to promote an approach to dialogue where non-contradiction is not the controlling rule of thought: "The yin-yang philosophy in oriental thinking understands that 'A' and 'negation A' are correlated, interdependent, and interpenetrating." (Pui-Lan 1994 p.69).

[24] Ward 1994 p.322

[25] Ward 1994 p.323

[26] It is possible that Ward 1994 represents a further shift in position but the

and Netland are both committed to some form of foundationalism. They seek to justify either a particular tradition (Netland) or the tradition that privileges no tradition (Ward) with principles of reason that transcend those traditions. This permits an apologetic procedure in keeping with the conditions outlined by Griffiths. However, a growing number of objections to foundationalist apologetics have begun to make this procedure untenable. Kuhn and Malcolm have raised the kind of objections which have led to a wider abandonment of foundationalism. Ward and Netland reject this abandonment on the grounds that it entails a loss of objectivity and an incoherent endorsement of relativism.[27] Relativism is easily defeated as self-refuting for it cannot be an objective truth that no truth is objective or a relative truth that no truth is absolute. If relativism is incoherent then, claim Ward and Netland, tradition-transcending rational principles are the only viable alternative. However, the cultural movement of non-foundationalism of which Kuhn and Malcolm are a part is a deliberate attempt to move beyond the polarity of either objectivity or relativity. Bernstein has charted this wider cultural movement with great clarity and his account will provide a basis to consider alternative models of apologetics.[28]

Beyond Objectivism and Relativism

Bernstein defines two opposing positions that have haunted discussions of foundationalism in western epistemology ever since the groundbreaking work of Descartes.[29] These two positions are objectivism and relativism. The former is described as:

qualifications he makes here still do not entirely dispense with a basic foundationalist epistemology.

[27] Netland 1991 pp.166-180 and Ward 1991 pp.178-181.

[28] Bernstein 1983

[29] Descartes 1987. The legacy Descartes left to western intellectual thought is described as the "Cartesian Anxiety" (Bernstein 1983 p.16) which is in essence an

> the basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness or rightness.[30]

The work of the philosopher according to this position is to establish this matrix so that moral or rational disputes may be settled without appeal to subjective factors. A great incentive to adopt this ambition was the success of the natural sciences from around the time of Descartes and on into the twentieth century. Given the success of the physical sciences to manipulate nature and settle disputes it was natural that philosophers should seek to develop an epistemology that did not rely on tradition, revelation or other cultural factors. Despite marked differences among its contributors, the dominant philosophical project from this time forward was the development of a theory of knowledge with the status of scientific objectivity.[31] The only alternative to such a scientific epistemology seemed to be a collapse into relativism. Bernstein describes the rival view of the relativist:

> his or her essential claim is that there can be no higher appeal than to a given conceptual scheme, language game, set of social practices, or historical epoch. There is a nonreducible plurality of such schemes, paradigms, and practices; there is no substantive overarching framework in which radically different and alternative schemes are commensurable - no universal standards that somehow stand outside of and above these competing alternatives.[32]

anxiety over how to establish secure foundations for true knowledge.

[30] Bernstein 1983 p.8

[31] Bernstein 1983 pp.45-47. This led to the distinction between fact and value which mirrors the objective-subjective distinction. Newbigin has critiqued this false distinction in western culture from a religious perspective. See particularly Newbigin 1989 and 1995 pp.29-44.

[32] Bernstein 1983 pp.11-12

Bernstein distinguishes the intellectual movement of relativism from subjectivism. It is subjectivism that easily falls foul of the incoherence objection. If all truth were *merely* the expression of subjective feeling or opinion then clearly truth could not be appealed to as objective fact. However, relativism is a theory about all reflection and the objection that it is self-relativising is of no consequence.[33] Therefore, two intellectual options seem to confront us; either objectivism or relativism.

Bernstein identifies a growing consensus which acknowledges that this discussion of epistemology has been shaped by a false dichotomy. There is even a growing consensus regarding where the resources to solve this problem may be found. Bernstein finds an example of this dichotomy in the work of Rorty:

> Lurking in the background here is a false dichotomy: either permanent standards of rationality (objectivism) *or* arbitrary acceptance of one set of standards or practices over against its rival (relativism).[34]

In contrast to this polarisation Bernstein points to the growing number of thinkers who are critics of both these positions. Indeed, Bernstein follows Gadamer in pointing out that the two positions are related. Relativism is "itself parasitic upon objectivism."[35] The reason for this is that both positions rely upon a common assumption that truth must either be founded on neutral principles or chosen as a result of personal prejudice. They both continue the project of solving the "Cartesian Anxiety" either by constructing objective foundations or by embracing relativism.[36]

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[33] Bernstein refers to Gadamer's response to the internal incoherence objection on this point. Gadamer demonstrates that it is not the relativists case that is fatally wounded by this kind of argument but "the claim to truth of all formal argument that is affected." (Bernstein 1983 p.234 n.18)
[34] Bernstein 1983 p.68
[35] Bernstein 1983 p.37
[36] Bernstein 1983 p.23

The resources to overcome the false dichotomy are primarily to be found in the work of a number of continental scholars. Bernstein identifies a tradition of hermeneutics which has considered more carefully the role of the linguistic paradigm in which a community of thinkers conduct their rational enterprise.[37] In the work of Kuhn, Bernstein draws attention to the recovery of hermeneutics in the history of science. The implications of this recovery has been to bring into question "the sharp dichotomy that has been made between observation and theory" along with "the insistence on the underdetermination of theory by fact" and "the exploration of the ways in which all description and observation are theory-impregnated."[38] Kuhn is not commending the relativist position but he is undermining the illusory quest to replace the paradigmatic nature of rationality with neutral principles. That paradigmatic sense of rationality is not a capitulation to relativism but a matter of taking seriously the organic relationship between a community of enquirers, their beliefs, their methods and their world.

> The shift from a model of rationality that searches for determinate rules which can serve as necessary and sufficient conditions, to a model of practical rationality that emphasizes the role of *exemplars* and judgmental interpretation, is not only characteristic of theory-choice but is a leitmotif that pervades all of Kuhn's thinking about science.[39]

It is the context of rational thought that provides the range of examples and models to guide the application of rational principles to specific situations or possible beliefs.

[37] This tradition includes Kuhn, Feyerabend, Gadamer, Habermas but also includes such critics of Kuhn as Popper. Each, in their own way, draws attention to the contextual place of rational thought even though their differences have sometimes obscured the basic consensus (Bernstein 1983 p.60).
[38] Bernstein 1983 p.31
[39] Bernstein 1983 p.57

Even the threefold criteria for truth (correspondence, coherence and the pragmatic) require exemplars to model how they should be applied in practice.

In drawing together the themes of postempiricist thought Bernstein opens up the options for engagement with pluralism beyond the simple objectivism or relativism marking much Anglo-American thought. It is in this direction that the possibilities for a non-foundational Christian apologetic emerge.[40] Before we consider various options for Christian apologetics after objectivism and relativism we will develop our analysis of foundationalist Christian apologetics. In order to do this we shall assess the work of Hick as a representative foundationalist apologist. He is an interesting choice because in certain respects Hick would distance himself from foundationalism.[41] However, his foundationalism is apparent in the development of his epistemology. His apologetic strategy has evolved in keeping with marked changes in his theological position but in essence it has always depended upon a tradition-transcending account of the rationality of a religious outlook in contrast to naturalism. This analysis will enable us to locate the historic source of this form of foundationalism and then critique it in the light of postempiricist thought.

[40] Such apologetic strategies have been in circulation for some time i.e. Van Til 1976 and Wolterstorff 1976 (Though see Phillips 1988 pp.94-113 for an alternative interpretation of these thinkers). An example of a specific attempt to go even further in appropriating the insights of the tradition identified by Bernstein to evangelical apologetics is found in Kenneson 1995.

[41] He would distance himself from foundationalism, arguing that his position shares much with Plantinga's non-foundationalism (Hick 1989a p.229 n.2). He would also distance himself from apologetics, arguing that our engagement with other religions should be one of dialogue rather than debate (Hick 1989a pp.378-379). This present thesis argues that these differences are semantic not substantial.

Chapter 2 An Account of Hick's Epistemology

(a) Against Propositionalism: Faith as Interpretation

We shall now consider Hick's position regarding the relationship between faith and reason. It will be noted that Hick offers his work as an apologetic for religion against atheistic naturalism. In order to argue this it will be necessary to engage extensively with his epistemology. This is stated in most detail in his earliest book,[1] written prior to his adoption of a pluralist position regarding other religions.[2] We shall see in the latter part of this chapter that Hick's epistemology remains substantially unchanged in his later work. In fact, his epistemology is the only stable element in his entire project and thus, if his work is faulted at this point, Hick's pluralism must be fatally flawed.

Catholic Propositionalism

Hick begins his extended treatment of faith by describing what he considers to be the mistaken Thomist-Catholic 'propositional' account of faith. With reference to Aquinas, Hick describes this position as claiming that belief is not directly related to God but "propositions".[3] Hick identifies propositions as verbal statements about God such as those found in the creeds. If salvation is related to belief then it "is necessary for salvation to believe explicitly such central articles as the Incarnation and the Trinity"[4] insofar as one is able to understand their cognitive content. The difference between faith and knowledge concerns the degree to which evidence supports the object of belief. Knowledge is self-evident while faith is not. However, it does not

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[1] See Hick 1957. The problem of continuity in Hick's work will be treated extensively in Chapter 2 (d). See further D'Costa 1984.
[2] Early statements of this position are found in Hick 1972 and Hick 1974b.
[3] Hick 1988a p.12
[4] Hick 1988a p.13

follow that faith is any less certain than knowledge. In fact, faith is itself a subjective act of certainty, it "involves an act of commitment which sets aside the uncertainty that would otherwise be present."[5] This certainty is grounded not in logical indubitability but in a subjective act of personal response.

Hick points out that this account of faith does not demand an irrational leap in thinking. The act of *faith* is itself based on prior *knowledge* such as the existence of God (understood to be proven in the Scholastic tradition) or the reliability of the Bible and this knowledge provides reason for faith.[6] Hick describes Locke's account as another expression of the Scholastic concern with the preambles to faith; "reason must establish that a particular proposition has in fact come from God before our faith can have anything to exercise itself upon."[7] Therefore, faith is based upon reason but not compelled by evidence. Hick illustrates this aspect of faith through Aquinas' discussion of demons who have faith in God's existence but who have no credit in their form of faith. Demons are compelled to believe by their intellect.[8] Faith is only a virtue when it is uncompelled.

The Thomist-Catholic model of faith balances the private reasoning of individuals with the self-authenticating authority of the Church. Hick uses Newman's metaphor: "the lamp of private judgment may be required to enable us to find our way; but once

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[5] Hick 1988a p.15
[6] Hick 1988a p.16 writes of this as the "Catholic" position but is not clear as to whether he considers it an appropriate reading of Aquinas. There are grounds to doubt that Hick's description of the Scholastic tradition is an accurate exposition of Aquinas. Wolterstorff "The Migration of the Theistic Arguments: From Natural Theology to Evidentialist Apologetics" in Audi and Wainwright 1986 draws a helpful contrast between Locke and Aquinas. See also Velecky 1994 for an alternative interpretation of the Thomistic "proofs".
[7] Hick 1988a p.18
[8] Hick 1988a p.19

we have reached home we no longer have need of it."[9] This simile highlights the resting place for the cognitive certainty of faith. It does not rest with a given reason or logical argument, but rather with the self-authenticating nature of the Church. Reasons are inevitably tentative pronouncements, open in principle to some form of falsification at a later date. However, if reasons are only the ladder or lamp by which the real secure platform is reached, the authority of the Church, then if the ladder or lamp are later found broken or faulty it will no longer matter. The certainty of faith will be grounded elsewhere.

Hick summarises this account of faith in terms of three components.[10] Firstly, the account is "intellectualist" as it identifies faith with trust in the truth of propositions. Secondly, faith is "fideistic" being grounded in a self-authenticating source. Thirdly, faith is "voluntaristic" being an uncompelled act of the will.

Revelation as Divine Communication

This view of faith entails a particular concept of revelation. Faith and revelation correlate to one another as the human response to the divine disclosure. Hick describes the Thomist-Catholic view of revelation as the divine communication of verbally expressed truths to human beings. Hick describes the content of this communication as the knowledge necessary for salvation through Israel and in Christ:

> The Bible finds its place within this scheme of thought as the book in which the saving truths are written down and made available, under the Church's guardianship, to all mankind.[11]

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[9] Hick 1988a p.22
[10] Hick 1988a p.23
[11] Hick 1988a p.25

According to Hick, this conception of revelation also requires belief in the verbal inerrancy of the Bible. Whether one is discussing natural theology or revealed theology, Hick contends that this position "restricts the entire discussion to propositional truths."[12] This, then, is an intellectualist view of faith and reason as assent to verbal truths communicated by God. Interestingly, as Hick points out, even the post-Enlightenment critics of Christianity have tended to proceed upon the same intellectualist foundations.[13] They also believe that all knowledge must relate to propositions but, in contrast, they reject the idea that one is within one's epistemic rights to believe a proposition to be true without sufficient evidence. Hence, according to Hick's account, both Aquinas and Huxley are 'foundationalists'.

Hick does not expressly state, at least in his early work, his exact objections to the Thomist-Catholic view he outlines. Rather than providing clear critical objections he notes that "the notion of divinely revealed propositions has virtually disappeared from Protestant theology."[14] Hick assumes, at this stage, that this position is untenable and continues in his attempt to produce an alternative conception of faith. Our purpose here is to note the position with which Hick takes issue as the background to his own alternative suggestion. Whatever the accuracy of Hick's exposition, the model he has described does capture the essential components of the foundationalist apologetic model. Given this model of the relationship between faith and reason it is reasonable to maintain that the objects of faith, though inherently groundless, may be accepted on the basis of reasonable evidence grounded in the normal rules of rationality and language use.

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[12] Hick 1988a p.36
[13] Hick notes Huxley, Kaufmann and Robinson (1988a p.27) and one may add the various essays of Russell, Flew and Gale.
[14] Hick 1988a p.30.

Faith as Interpretation

We have already noted that faith is a correlate to revelation. Hick maintains a conception of revelation not as divinely spoken truths (the heart of the Propositional model) but as divine presence.[15] Consequently, faith, as correlate, is "man's awareness of God."[16] Hick understands faith to be another form of perceptual experience:

> We become conscious of the existence of other objects in the universe, whether things or persons, either by experiencing them for ourselves or by inferring their existence from evidences within our experience.[17]

The cognitive awareness of God is an example of experiencing something for ourselves directly rather than inferring its existence from evidence. Hick is concerned to show that faith is not an entirely unique form of knowledge but is related to all our forms of knowing. We are aware of the divine reality "not apart from the course of mundane life, but in it and through it."[18] This is because the divine presence is mediated through awareness of the world rather than it directly impinging on our senses. This relationship of knower to the world underlies the basic structure of all knowledge rather than being a unique element in religious knowledge. Hick argues that "while the object of religious knowledge is unique, its basic epistemological pattern is that of all our knowing."[19] To understand Hick's model of faith we must first examine his general conception of knowledge in some detail.

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[15] In Chapter 6 (a) we shall note the absence of any concept of revelation in Hick's later work.
[16] Hick 1988a p.95
[17] Hick 1988a p.95
[18] Hick 1988a p.96
[19] Hick 1988a p.97

A General Account of Epistemology

Human experience must be understood in terms of two factors. The first of these is "significance"[20] by which Hick means the form that the natural world takes when we encounter it. The second is that of "interpretation"[21] through which we relate ourselves in an appropriate manner to the significance before us. The world always presents itself as significant, in other words it takes a particular form. The only alternative to this sense of significance, is that we should experience the world as "a mere empty void or churning chaos".[22] Significance is a basic feature of human experience without which knowledge would be impossible. Even at this early stage in his work, Hick acknowledged his sympathy with a Kantian form of epistemology:[23]

> In its most general form at least, we must accept the Kantian thesis that we can be aware only of that which enters into a certain framework of basic relations which is correlated with the structure of our own consciousness.[24]

The significance of the world is not an optional extra that we might impose upon the universe as and when we felt it necessary so to do. Nor is the significance of the world inherent in the world regardless of the role, character and dispositions of the observers. Consciousness is structured in such a way that to experience the world is to experience form rather than chaos. The basic assumption of the knowing subject is the assumption that the universe is intelligible. The objects that we encounter in the world are only "objects" because the mind orders its information in a particular way and, through a network of relationships, isolates particular objects such as 'hats' and

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[20] Hick 1988a p.96
[21] Hick 1988a p.97
[22] Hick 1988a p.98
[23] This connection will be developed in detail in Chapter 4.
[24] Hick 1988a p.98

'lamp-posts' from their surroundings. If the universe had no form then the notion of a subject-object relationship and an intelligible universe would make no sense at all. Oliver Sacks, in his collection of accounts of psychological disorders, describes a man who mistook his wife for his hat.[25] In this example, the relationship between a man and his hat (and his wife) has become distorted. However, it does not follow that the world has lost all intelligibility, form and significance for him. Rather, the significance of the world has changed and the man is operating with a different conception of the intelligibility of the universe than that of his wife, doctor and most other human beings. However outlandish an ordering of the universe may become Hick maintains that it must be ordered. Ordering experience is the basic function of the mind and the basic assumption of all knowledge.

Hick describes 'interpretation' as the subjective correlative of significance.[26] By classifying interpretation as the subjective pole of knowledge, 'significance' must therefore be the objective pole. This means that objectivity is no more than the objective order of the world *as we know it*. Objectivity cannot be identified apart from its 'significance' for us. In a formal sense, both significance and interpretation are subjective components of our knowledge, though the former seems to have its source outside of our own imaginings. The implication of this point is that while Hick describes his epistemology in terms of the subject/object distinction, nonetheless, both subjectivity and objectivity exist only in relation to the knowing subject.[27]

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[25] Sacks 1986
[26] Hick 1988a p.101
[27] Because objectivity is subsumed by subjectivity, the foundations are laid for the increasingly radical distinction made between the noumenal and phenomenal orders of reality that we shall trace through Hick's work. We note here that in its earliest philosophical expression Hick's epistemology already cut asunder the tie between

The Significance of Reality

Hick distinguishes two forms of interpretation. Firstly, there is interpretation as "explanation"[28] where an attempt is made to address why something is or is not the case. Secondly, interpretation is "recognition"[29] which implies a much more immediate epistemic act of recognising something when it is presented to our senses. The second sense relies upon the former as the context in which recognition occurs. Examples of explanation might include metaphysical and scientific theories of why the universe exists, its purpose, origins and *telos*. Recognition includes interpretation of things or animals such as houses, buses and dogs. Interpretation as recognition underlies all human knowledge and it is this sense of interpretation that Hick adopts as the key to understanding all human knowing including religious knowledge.

The human subject interprets objects as having significance at different levels. Hick gives the example of a book that may be interpreted at a simple material level as a rectangular red object. At a more complex level, a language user may interpret it as "the expression of specific thoughts."[30] The more complex levels of interpretation presuppose the simple levels. This pattern of interpretation may be expressed diagrammatically as a simple epistemological staircase.

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knowledge and reality.

[28] Hick 1988a p.101

[29] Hick 1988a p.102

[30] Hick 1988a p.103. Hick may be confusing two objects of interpretation here: the significance of a book's format (red rectangle) and the significance of a book's content (expression of thoughts). It is not clear that the two acts of interpretation are related at all, much less that they are related by a matter of degree as Hick implies.

Figure 1 represents the way in which levels of interpretation build upon one another presupposing previous, less complex, interpretations of reality. Highly complex levels of interpretation recognise significance that is "superimposed upon"[31] and interpenetrate with more basic interpretations of significance. This pattern of development will be shown to form the basic structure of Hick's epistemology.

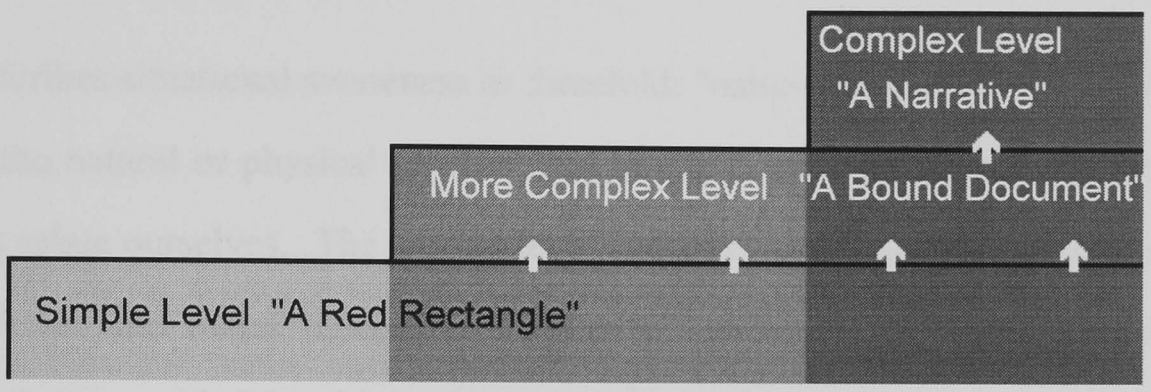

Figure 1 Complexity of Interpretation

All objects appear within situational significance. The example of the book clearly represents this: no one could make the highly complex interpretations of a book without a knowledge of the cultural and linguistic situation in which the book is found. Whenever an interpretation is made an entire web of related interpretations are also at work concerning the relationships between objects and between objects and people. However, Hick's point is that the interpretation/significance pattern of knowledge is true for all acts of knowing, whether we are concerned with a simple act of finding the vacuum cleaner or a complex act of interpreting Old English literature.

Our focal awareness is only ever directed toward a particular situation selected from the web of situations in which we exist. While we are aware of a game of chess we

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[31] Hick 1988a p.103

are playing we may not be aware of the music playing in the background, the rain falling outside or even the wood out of which the chess pieces are made. The situation which has significance for us will change in terms of changing circumstances. Hick describes the epistemic impact of our friend talking to us or a fire breaking out in the building while we are playing chess. Either of these events would cause our focal awareness to change.[32]

Hick describes situational awareness as threefold; "nature, man and God".[33] The first level is the natural or physical environment in which we must survive and to which we must relate ourselves. The second level concerns human and social relationships in which we find moral significance. Finally, the divine level encompasses both previous levels and is "the ultimately fateful".[34] The divine level is the object of our ultimate concern. Expressed diagrammatically, we may see how this relates to the basic-complex development previously considered.

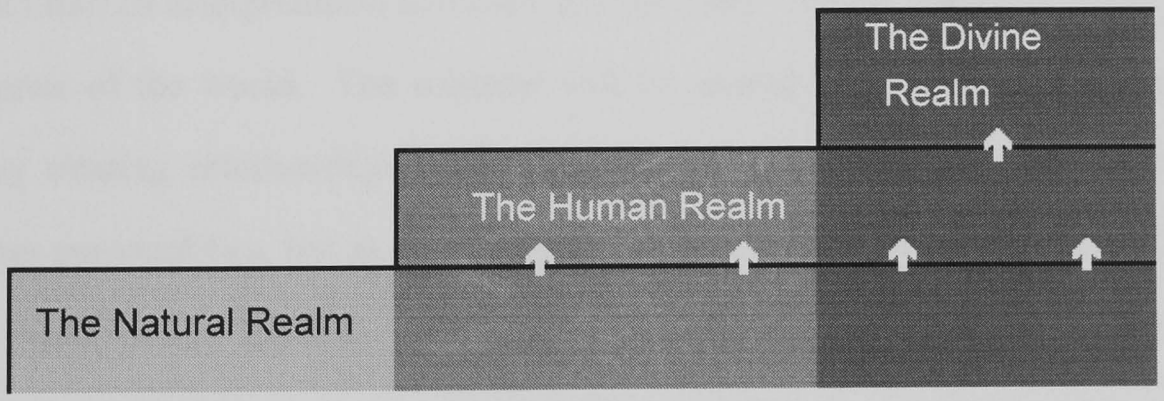

Figure 2 Realms of Interpretation

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[32] Hick 1988a p.106
[33] Hick 1988a p. 107
[34] Hick 1988a p.107

In figure 2 we see how each situation interpenetrates the previous one. Consequently, they are not distinct levels of interpretation. There is no other way, in this epistemology, but to climb the stair of knowledge from the natural realm, through the human realm and, through both of these realms, to the divine.

Each realm of significance requires two forms of human response in order for recognition to occur: interpretation and relation. Interpretation is normally "an unconscious and habitual process" by which we order the objects of perception.[35] The basic interpretation of the world which we inhabit as being 'there' is "unevidenced and unevidencable"[36] because this basic act of interpretation itself provides the foundational level of interpretation. All knowledge involves interpretation, even the basic, unevidenced, act of interpreting the universe as a common world inhabited by independent minds. The second form of human response concerns the act of relating our lives to the interpretation that we adopt. Lives are ordered properly when they are related to the world as we interpret it in an appropriate way.

The first order of interpretation involves appropriately relating ourselves to the natural significance of the world. The solipsist will be related in an appropriate way to the world by treating relationships with other people "not as transsubjective meetings with other personalities, but as dialogues and dramas with oneself."[37] At the level of natural significance, there is little scope for varied interpretations. People may interpret physical objects or situations as they wish but the appropriateness of those interpretations will be tested as those people live in relationship to the objects or situations in question. Returning to our example from Sacks, the man who interprets

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[35] Hick 1988a p.108
[36] Hick 1988a p.109
[37] Hick 1988a p.110

his wife as a hat fails to live successfully in relation both to his spouse and to his garments. The structure of the world does not permit great variety in interpretation. If one interprets the rain outside as sunshine and leaves the building without protection then one gets wet.

Hick divides the levels of interpretation into three with natural significance at the basic level. We shall incorporate his divisions into the stair diagram and it will be clear that each step corresponds with the equivalent step found in figures 1 and 2.

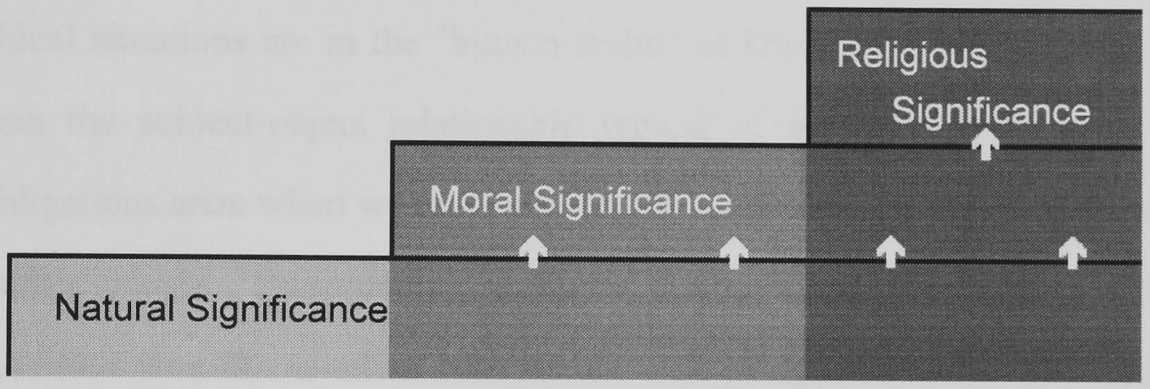

Figure 3 Levels of Significance

Human beings share with the animal world the need to interpret and relate to the natural significance of the world. In figure 3 we see that the second step is that of "moral significance" and this is the form that interpretation takes in the human realm of the second step in figure 2; "It is characteristic of mankind to live not only in terms of the natural significance of his world but also in the dimension of personality and responsibility."[38] Moral obligation is the character of human experience as we move on from the basic interpretation of the world in terms of natural significance to the

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[38] Hick 1988a p.111

interpretation of human relationships and personal situations. This moral interpretation occurs when one feels an ethical obligation to act in a particular way in some situation. Hick describes this act of interpretation as "supervening" upon the prior act of interpreting the world as of natural significance.[39] He then provides an example of how this development of interpretation might occur:

> A traveler on an unfrequented road .... comes upon a stranger who has met with an accident and who is lying injured and in need of help. At the level of natural significance this is just an empirical state of affairs .... But an act .... of interpretation at the moral level reveals to the traveler a situation in which he is under obligation to render aid.[40]

Such ethical situations are in the "human realm" of knowledge because they involve more than the subject-object relationship typical of natural significance. Hence, moral obligations arise when we recognise an ethical dimension in our responsibilities toward other people. Presumably, on Hick's thesis, if one feels ethical obligations toward animals then this is either because the well being of some or all people are at stake in the mistreatment of animals or because one has personified animals.[41] Ethical obligation toward the inanimate environment might also be explained by either of these motives. However, in a world of impersonal matter inhabited by a single human being, ethical significance would never arise and, with it, the need to climb the second step in this epistemic hierarchy of knowledge.

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[39] Hick 1988a p.111

[40] Hick 1988a p.111

[41] And there may be good grounds for such a personification in which case the human-animal encounters would also be in the realm of moral, situational significance. However, Hick is not concerned with moral obligation outside the sphere of human relationships and so we need not deal with this issue here.

Hick describes the relationship between the natural and ethical spheres of significance as interpenetrating one another.[42] The latter is more complex than the former but it is only made possible on the basis of the former; "ethical significance is mediated to us in and through the natural world."[43] While interpretation is necessary in order to relate oneself to either level of interpretation, Hick describes the ethical level as "a more truly voluntary one."[44] The reason for this is that reality permits greater variety in the possible human responses to the moral order. In the case of natural significance there are strict limitations on possible interpretations. In the case of situations demanding moral obligation we may choose to act in a variety of ways and it may be hard to assess which of two different actions is the more moral. This moral relativity gives rise to the need for the existence of prisons and long term moral debates where a plurality of views regarding what constitutes moral behaviour are obviously at issue.

The Foundations of Religious Knowledge

The third step or level of interpretation brings us to the question of the foundations for religious belief and the scope they allow for apologetic encounter. This is the level of religious significance; "As ethical significance interpenetrates natural significance, so religious significance interpenetrates both ethical and natural."[45] Just as ethical significance cannot exist without natural significance, so religious significance cannot exist without both previous levels. This is why the stair diagram is so appropriate in codifying Hick's position. Each step in the staircase rests on those previous to it and, while being a level in itself, cannot exist without the foundations provided by previous steps. So religious significance, while it may be considered as a level in

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[42] Hick 1988a p.112
[43] Hick 1988a p.112
[44] Hick 1988a p.112
[45] Hick 1988a p.113

itself, may only be understood as mediated through the levels of natural and moral significance. Because each step interpenetrates those previous to it, Hick must declare the third step a "total interpretation".[46] It is the highest step that we may reach and, on this step the act of interpretation recognises the world as having divine significance. At this stage in his thought Hick was working with an explicitly Christian position that we shall see heavily qualified a little later[47] and so in this early expression of this thought he describes religious significance in theistic terms:

> His interpretative leap carries him into a world which exists through the will of a holy, righteous, and loving Being who is the creator and sustainer of all that is.[48]

Hick's use of the term "leap" in this context is of no small significance. Each sphere or step of interpretation requires a step of some sort. The initial presupposition on which each level of interpretation rests is unevidenced. No evidence can be deduced to decide the issue is some final way between the solipsist and objective realist,[49] between those who act on moral obligations and the "moral solipsist",[50] or between the naturalist and the religious person.[51] Climbing the epistemological staircase requires initial acts of increasingly uncompelled interpretation to begin each new stage. The act of ethical interpretation was more voluntary than the natural. The act of religious interpretation is entirely uncompelled. Religious belief rests upon an awareness of divine reality mediated through the natural and ethical spheres of human

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[46] Hick 1988a p.113 and the main theme of part 3 p.149ff
[47] See Chapter 2 (c)
[48] Hick 1988a p.115
[49] Hick 1988a p.110
[50] Hick 1988a p.113
[51] Hick 1988a p.115

knowledge but, according to Hick, this awareness results from an uncompelled human act rather than a compelling divine revelation.

Religious faith is the act of interpretation at this final level. It is the uncompelled or free act of human response to an awareness, mediated through nature and conscience, of there being a good God.[52] Hick ramifies his account of the uncompelled nature of faith by providing certain theological reasons for this being the case. In essence, it is the personal character of humanity and God and the relational character of faith that demands faith be uncompelled in nature:

> If man is to be personal, God must be *deus absconditus*. He must, so to speak, stand back, hiding himself behind his creation, and leaving us the freedom to recognise or fail to recognise his dealings with us.[53]

Hick claims that the only alternative is a God who would manipulate human beings and coerce them into faith. The natural world does coerce responses by preventing certain dangerous interpretations from being made but God, unlike the natural order, "desires, not a compelled obedience, but our uncoerced growth towards the humanity revealed in Christ."[54] The ambiguity of religious significance in the world is the necessary condition for a truly personal relationship between humanity and God. We may locate the orders of compulsion and interpretation in a further staircase diagram.

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[52] In later writings Hick substantially modifies the locus of religious awareness to accommodate his pluralist thesis. This move is considered in detail during Chapter 2 (c). At this point we remain concerned with the early form of his epistemology.
[53] Hick 1988a p.135
[54] Hick 1988a p.135

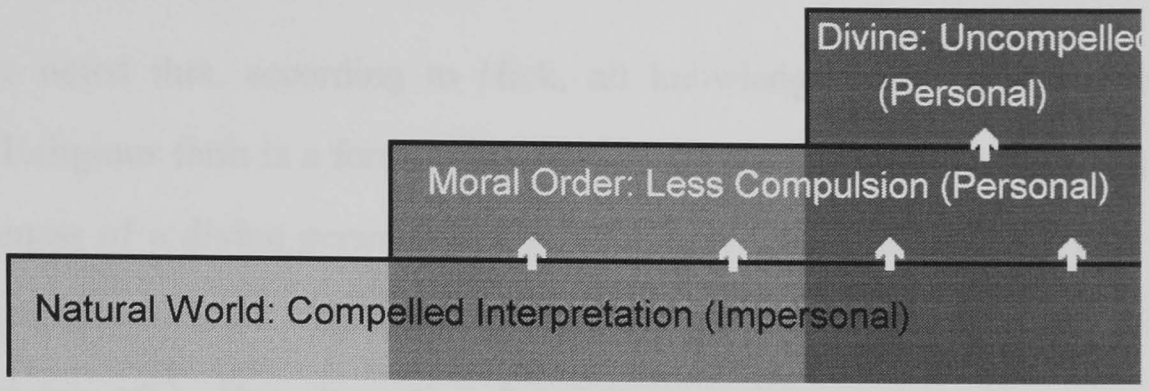

Figure 4 Freedom and Interpretation

Figure 4 describes the position of religious knowledge in Hick's epistemology. Religious knowledge is not primary, in the sense of preceding or even predetermining other areas of knowledge, but tertiary, depending as it does on the more basic levels of natural and moral knowing. Furthermore, religious knowledge is the ultimate expression of voluntaristic knowing. A free act of will is required in order to enter the religious dimension of knowledge. There may be atheists who agree with theists in most of the components in steps one and two but disagree as to the possibility of there existing a supreme creator being. The strength of this epistemic scheme for apologetic encounter seems great. However, as we continue to outline the underlying structure of Hick's epistemology it will become clear that this scheme demands a serious revision of Christian doctrine and, therefore, a profoundly truncated role for apologetics. In the next part of this section we shall consider the core of Hick's apologetic for Christian theism.

(b) Belief and Knowledge

We have noted that, according to Hick, all knowledge involves interpretation of reality. Religious faith is a form of knowledge resulting from the human response to an awareness of a divine personal reality. All experience shapes the reality that we perceive and so Hick describes experience as best understood in terms of "experiencing-as".[1] This alternative description emphasises the subjective aspect of experience. Hick denies that there is any such thing as unmediated experience and, in contrast, affirms that all experience of the world is experience of something in a form that is appropriate to human cognition.

The uncompelled nature of faith relates us to ambiguous religious reality rather than physical reality. This raises an important problem. One might have good reason to trust in the veridical nature of claims to experience concerning the material order because, being somewhat compelled, such experience is unambiguous and shared by most people. However, religious awareness is ambiguous and voluntary. Consequently, one may have good reason to question whether it is awareness of anything external to the knower. Hick, sensitive to this problem, finds the dilemma well stated by Hare in his suggestion that faith is a "blik ..... a way of looking at the world which terminates in the world itself."[2] The possibility of apologetics turns on this question of realism. If Hick is willing to accept the categorisation of religious knowledge as non-realist then his system has no place for religious apologetics. However, the stair diagram demonstrates the continuity between natural and religious

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[1] Hick 1988a p.142. Experiencing-as is a technical term added to the second edition of Faith and Knowledge. It is offered as a term of clarification for Hick's work rather than as a revision. It is discussed fully in Chapter 3 (a).
[2] Hick 1988a p.151. cf. Hare 1955.

knowledge. The uncompelled nature of religious knowledge distances it from other forms of knowledge only as a matter of degree not as a matter of kind. The realist intent of all knowledge claims is a continuous thread running through Hick's work.

Theism against Atheism

In his early work Hick is not concerned with the question of pluralism as such but only with the difference between theistic and atheistic (or supernaturalist and naturalist) belief. In the following discussion we shall pursue the clash of these particular polarities. Hick gives consideration to certain arguments in favour of the existence of God which, if favourable, would provide logical reasons to accompany religious awareness. If this connection could be made then faith would operate with at least some of the certitude belonging to natural significance beliefs and faith would not depend wholly upon uncompelled awareness of the divine. Hick deals with arguments both for and against the existence of God. Either argument would have the same logical function of providing reasons for affirming or rejecting the theistic explanation of the universe on grounds other than experiencing-as.

One of the most common theistic arguments has been stated in terms of probability. In essence, such an argument is that the appearance of the universe suggests that it is more likely the product of an intelligent designer than not.[3] Hick's epistemological account of faith rules out any probability argument. Referring to a phrase coined by Pierce he writes; if "universes were as plentiful as blackberries, we might be able to

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[3] A clear example given in Swinburne 1981. He describes rationality as belief "rendered probable by [the] evidence" (p.63). Though there are different degrees of this probability and the exact locus of what must be probable are varied nonetheless he maintains that rational belief must be belief in something that one understands to have a probability closer to 1 than to 0 and/or a greater probability than its alternatives (p.119). See also Abraham 1987.

estimate the probable character of this particular universe on the basis of the already known characters of other universes."[4] Probability is inappropriate when applied to the character of the universe because our very use of the term "universe" implies the totality of all things. There is nothing by which such totality may be compared or measured. In our staircase diagram of Hick's epistemology we have seen that religious faith is the final interpretative step and, for that reason, is a total interpretation of the universe as we know it. As a total interpretation it may not be compared with anything else for there is no other information available with which the interpretation may be tested. This problem remains the same in the case of all world views. As systems of total explanation they may not be argued for in terms of probability:

> We cannot weigh one metaphysical system against another as relatively more or less probable .... if theism and naturalism are alike permissible interpretations of the phenomena of human experience, they must in the eyes of logic stand on an equal footing.[5]

Probability cannot decide in favour of Christian faith. However, nor can the antitheistic arguments such as the argument from evil decide against Christianity. The problem in deciding between theism and naturalism is not a lack of relevant information but a logical lack of any vantage point from which such an assessment could be made:

> There is no objective measuring rod by which to compare the depth to which wickedness can sink with the height to which goodness can rise, and so to balance the problem of evil, which challenges theism, against the problem of good, which challenges naturalism.[6]

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[4] Hick 1988a p.152
[5] Hick 1988a p.154
[6] Hick 1988a p.156

Following on from the fact that the interpretation of the world as having religious significance is a total interpretation, neither the theistic nor the atheistic world view can settle their differences by appeal to objective arguments or evidence. Debate between such world views cannot proceed purely in terms of rational argument but must involve the "attempt to bring the other to see the universe as he himself sees it."[7] For example, appeals by theists to the evidential value of fulfilled prophecy or answered prayer cannot settle the dispute. The findings here rely upon voluntary interpretation of the evidence and the evidence is itself ambiguous. The religious perspective of the believer and the naturalist perspective of the unbeliever are already "arrived at by another path."[8] That "other path" is the experiential awareness of the religious believer that we have already considered. To be conscious of reality as infused with the divine presence provides the only justification for faith in God. Similarly, the atheist may also be justified in adopting the beliefs that they do because of a failure to perceive a religious dimension in their total picture of the universe.[9]

The Status of Religious Language

This distinction between believer and unbeliever implies that the differences between them cannot be settled by induction. Clearly, this creates a problem for apologetic appeal to evidence as grounds for belief but we have already had reason to dispense with any form of apologetics that adopts such a strategy.[10] However, Hick deals with a further problem concerning the meaning and status of religious language. If the difference between faith and unbelief does not concern any matter of fact such as a

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[7] Hick 1988a p.156
[8] Hick 1988a p.156
[9] Clouser 1991 argues that all perspectives are inherently religious and so the religious / naturalist division is not sustainable. This is developed in reference to Hick in Brakenhielm 1975.
[10] See Chapter 1 (d)

logical proof or an item of publicly accessible empirical fact then this gives rise to the possibility that there is no 'real' difference between the two positions. Faith is then to be understood as a "blik" word, a way of describing the world that is neither true nor false. Faith is then analogous to personal taste rather than public knowledge.

Hick has consistently maintained a realist account of religious knowledge throughout his work. In order to do so he had to formulate a way by which he could express the difference between self-referential statements of personal taste and the realist nature of religious truth claims. Hick did this by adopting the verificationist challenge and providing a response to it.

The classical statement of the verification principle was made by A.J.Ayer and the movement remembered as the Logical Positivists.[11] The most notorious principle suggested by Ayer was one offered as a criterion of meaning. The meaning of a claim could be understood by the conditions in which a claim would be understood to have been verified by sense experience. If one could not state the conditions under which sense verification could be said to have occurred then the claim must be understood to be, in a strictly technical sense, nonsense. This principle undermines the foundations of metaphysics. Rather than being offered as a principle to arbitrate between true and false statements it provides the means to distinguish between intelligible and nonsensical claims. The principle was subjected to heavy criticism and revision through which a weaker but more influential version of the principle was devised; falsification.[12]

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[11] Ayer 1946 and Ayer 1956. For a detailed discussion of the background to the movement and its influence on Hick see Loughlin 1986a pp.66-79.

[12] Popper 1980. Hick acknowledges the change (Hick 1988a pp.173-174) but suggests that both the earlier and later formulations of the principle share an asymmetrical relationship - some statements open only to verification (Hick 1988a

The Verification Principle

Hick adopts a form of the verification principle; "in order to be either veridical or illusory the mode of experiencing that we call religious faith must be such that the theological statements which express it are either verifiable or falsifiable."[13] Consequently, Hick brings the principle to bear upon the central theological statements of theistic belief. The experience that gives rise to faith is not itself testable because, according to Hick, it is non-propositional. However, certain theological expressions of faith are open to sense testing.

Hick argues that in order to safeguard the meaningfulness of theological statements it must be possible for their core content to be experienced by a conscious human being. This is because the word 'verification' is itself "primarily the name for an event which takes place in human consciousness."[14] Hence, there must be some public event to which we may refer where at least one human being would have sensory confirmation of a key theistic belief. This necessity is not in order to establish its truth but only its meaningfulness:

> If a proposition contains or entails predictions which can be verified or falsified, its character as an assertion (though not of course its character as a true assertion) is thereby established.[15]

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p.175).
[13] Hick 1988a p.169
[14] Hick 1988a p.171
[15] Hick 1988a p.172

Therefore, in order to confirm that religious utterances are genuine realist truth claims concerning objective reality Hick sets himself the task of isolating at least one claim that will be verified by a human subject through sensory experience.

Hick's resolution of the problem is known as eschatological verification.[16] The truth claims that Hick subjects to the principle of sense experience testing are those based on "expectations concerning the future".[17] The particular form of the belief for Christians is that "when history is completed it will be seen to have led to a particular end-state and to have fulfilled a specific purpose, namely that of creating 'children of God' ".[18] In order to show how this claim is compatible with the principle of verification Hick provides a simple parable.[19] The parable relates how two travellers walk the same road but have different views about where, if anywhere, the road leads. According to one, it leads to a celestial city whereas, according to the other, it leads nowhere. Each interprets all that they encounter along the road in the light of their own teleological belief. The road itself remains ambiguous providing no final evidence that would decide between them. However, there is an event that would verify the claims of the Celestial City believer. In the event of rounding a corner and arriving at the city, the believer would have his or her belief proven true. The point about the parable is not how one might verify a truth claim about the future or how

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[16] While first propounded in Hick 1957, Hick has continued to maintain its validity throughout his work. The principle has been subjected to major criticism (particularly Mathis 1985) and Hick's retention of the principle despite major revisions to the rest of his work has been charged with incoherence (Loughlin 1990). Significant modifications have occurred, particularly in Hick 1976a, 1977d (Mackie 1987 provides a response to this modification) and 1991a the significance of which we shall investigate shortly. All we need note here is that Hick at least attempts to retain the form of this principle in all his work including as recently as Hick 1995 pp.72-76.

[17] Hick 1988a p.176

[18] Hick 1988a p.178

[19] Hick 1988a pp.177-178 cf. Hick 1990a pp.104-105

one might seek to persuade an unbeliever. The parable shows how a real, experiential event is at issue and that, this being the case, the possibility of experiential testing proves that the rival assertions are both to be credited with the status of being genuine, meaningful assertions. Significant problems arise with this principle but Hick does argue that it secures one important victory. The meaningfulness of theistic or supernaturalist truth claims is established on the foundations of empiricism.

Hick's Apologetic

Hick seems to have offered a strong basis for a credible Christian apologetic. His epistemology is built upon a form of realism[20] in which one may distinguish between the neutral sensory data and the interpretative act that the human agent must make in order to integrate that data into his or her world view. This realism provides a basis for interreligious discussion, debate and disagreement over matters of 'fact'. Furthermore, religious belief is only a more complex development of natural and moral knowledge in which the methods of settling disputes is relatively clear cut. The difference between the method involved in solving a scientific dispute and solving a religious dispute is only a matter of degree not of kind. Indeed, the celestial city parable presents a basic empiricist criteria for evidence. This thesis will claim that the strength of Hick's apologetic is also its weakness. The kind of foundationalist strategy Hick outlined in this early work would inevitably demand a revision of Christianity and we turn to this in the next section.

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[20] Hick's distinction between naive and critical realism (Hick 1989a pp.173-174) is irrelevant. It is unclear that there is such a thing as naive realism offered by any serious contributor to the philosophy or theology discussions. Certainly, Hick can identify none.

(c) The Copernican Revolution

Hick's theological position underwent a dramatic change during the late sixties[1] which resulted in his newly formulated approach to the relationship between Christianity and other religions. D'Costa suggests that there were three primary causes to his shift of position. Firstly, Hick's position on universal salvation undermined the viability of any position which maintained that only Christianity is true while all other religions are false.[2] Secondly, his move to Birmingham brought him into contact with many different religions for which he gained great respect.[3] Thirdly, his work on a theology of death[4] led Hick to take seriously the alternative eschatological pictures held by other world religions.[5] These factors contribute to what Hick describes as a Copernican revolution in theology. This is a revolution that has occurred in his own work and which he calls to take place in the work of all mainstream Christian thought.

Hick has stated his developing position in many different writings and, as much remains in print, a confusion arises regarding the coherence of Hick's published corpus.[6] We shall now consider an early statement by Hick of the Copernican revolution and contrast this with a later statement. We shall then be in a position to consider the coherence of the internal project of the Copernican revolution and the wider implications for coherence in the relationship between the Copernican revolution and Hick's apologetic for faith.[7]

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[1] Useful biographical information is found in D'Costa 1987 pp.5-18, Eddy 1992 and Sinkinson 1995a pp.5-8.
[2] D'Costa 1987 p.12 cf. Hick 1980a pp.4-5
[3] D'Costa 1987 p.13 cf. Hick 1980a p.5
[4] Hick 1976a
[5] D'Costa 1987 p.13
[6] Giving rise to the charge of incoherence in Loughlin 1990.
[7] Chapter 2 (d)

The Essence of Christianity

An early statement of Hick's position is found in what is primarily a collection of essays with the title God and the Universe of Faiths.[8] The essays with which we shall be concerned were first given as part of a series of public lectures in 1972 and a form of one chapter was first published in that year.[9]

By the 'essence' of the Christian faith, Hick means "what is most important in Christianity".[10] However, before mounting an empirical investigation into this essence, he also states that the reason for isolating it is in order to facilitate an interreligious comparison:

> It is this that we want to be able to compare with the essence of other faiths, rather than any historical peculiarities of the Christian tradition which lie away from its religious centre.[11]

This highlights an important assumption concerning universality and particularity. The essence, according to Hick, cannot be particular to Christianity because if that were the case then comparison would be impossible. Therefore, essence must be something universal in order for comparison to be made. Consequently, the essence cannot be tied to the historical particularities of incarnation, atonement or resurrection because these would not facilitate comparison. This assumption lays down very significant parameters for what possible conclusions Hick may come to. In effect,

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[8] "The Essence of Christianity", "The Copernican Revolution in Theology" and "The New Map of the Universe of Faiths" in Hick 1988b pp.108-147 will be understood, as they were intended to be in the Birmingham lectures where they were first given, as forming a single argument (Hick 1988b xvi).
[9] Hick 1972
[10] Hick 1988b p.108
[11] Hick 1988b p.108

Hick is arguing that the possibility of comparison must determine what would constitute the essence of faith. Whatever is *sui generis* or contingent in a historical context must "lie away from" the essence of faith. This is a highly questionable methodological assumption; a desired objective (comparison) determines what might count as evidence for essence. Ruled out, *a priori*, is the possibility that religions could be strictly incommensurable or have, as their essence, matters of historical particularity.

Tracing the New Testament description of salvation as a "way" Hick concludes that "the essence of Christianity is not in believing rightly but in acting rightly in relation to our fellows."[12] Some beliefs form an integral part of the Christian way of life but the permanent basis of Christianity is found in:

> The life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, his influence upon those who responded to him in faith, their memories of him and of his words, and their experience of a new quality of life in a new relationship with God and with one another ....[13]

The essence of Christianity is a practical way of life related to the particularities of the Christ-event. However, in keeping with the methodological assumption noted earlier, Hick is keen to dissociate the Christ-event from historical particularities and, in effect, from particularism altogether. Consequently, he informs us that the "Christ-event was not an event in public history, but an event experienced in faith."[14] The particularities of the Christ-event are not historical particularities but particular experiences of the

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[12] Hick 1988b p.110
[13] Hick 1988b p.111
[14] Hick 1988b p.112

New Testament writers and of many later readers. These kind of particularities are not bound by history but are continually open to contemporary experience:

> To be a Christian today is to share the faith of the New Testament writers, seeing something of what they saw and feeling something of what they felt. But although we can share their faith we cannot, except for occasional glimpses, penetrate behind it to the Jesus of secular history.[15]

Hick's use of 'faith' here means 'experience', the correlation of which we have already noted.[16] An important distinction is now drawn between the Christ-event and the historical Jesus. The Christ-event concerns contemporary experience of reality but the historical figure of Jesus is an ambiguous figure of the past.[17] Hick argues that a process occurred in which Jesus was deified: "the community lived and grew, more and more men and women experiencing the excitement and peace of the new way, until before two generations had passed they came to think of Jesus as virtually God."[18] Hick's positive statements of who Jesus actually was are remarkably vivid considering his claim regarding the ambiguity of the evidence and, furthermore, these positive descriptions remain in use by Hick throughout his later work.[19] Concerning the ministry of Christ Hick writes:

> Travelling about Palestine with Jesus as he preached and healed, the disciples

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[15] Hick 1988b p.112
[16] Chapter 2 (b)
[17] The data are "fragmentary and ambiguous" writes Hick elsewhere in "Jesus and the World Religions" in Hick 1977a p.167.
[18] Hick 1988b p.113
[19] There are, of course, a number of significant changes in his metaphysical account of the incarnation. The account in the volume under present consideration (pp.148-164), replacing a substance Christology with a relational one, remains a relatively "high" Christology but is dispensed with in Hick 1989a in favour of a metaphorical account of incarnation that dissociates metaphorical language from ontology altogether. See also his account in Hick 1989b.

> had a sense of being on the inside of a dynamic divine action in the world, an invasion of human life by God's redeeming power focused in Jesus. He was God's agent among them .... [20]

Here Hick maintains an important identification between the activity of God and the activity of Christ in the "invasion" of human life by divine action.[21] However, this identification is related not to the ontological status of the historical Jesus but to the religious experience of the disciples. As we have noted, this is the third step in experience[22] and represents an experience shaped by the cultural/physical/ethical interpretative framework already in place. Hence, the first Jewish disciples interpreted their experience of Christ in a Judeo-Greek metaphysical framework. A different interpretation would have occurred elsewhere; "In eastern terms he was a *jivanmukti*, or he was a Buddha, one who had attained to true knowledge of and relation to reality."[23] The categories by which Christ was understood were relative to the culture of those followers who lived during, and soon after, his time. Had the historical Jesus ministered in the east, or the early Church been born in the east, Hick is sure that Jesus would have been understood in eastern terms. This account of the relationship between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith highlights an important aspect of Hick's account of the relationship between theology and experience: "theology is the attempt to state the meaning of revelatory events experienced in faith."[24] Thus theology has a second order relationship to experience which is the primary means by which Jesus is interpreted. In this way, Hick is able to distinguish between the essence of Christianity and the theology of the Church:

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[20] Hick 1988b p.113
[21] This is the kind of identification between God and Jesus spelled out in the *homoagape* Christology presented by Hick in this volume Hick 1988b pp.148-164.
[22] Chapter 2 (b)
[23] Hick 1988b p.115
[24] Hick 1988b p.117

> Christianity .... is an open-ended history which has taken varying forms in varying circumstances, and which has as its essence the way of salvation that was initiated by the Christ-event.[25]

Hick identifies salvation as "spiritual life and health"[26] and understands the specific Christian meaning of salvation to be the development of life and health through the Christ-event. The Christ-event, as we have noted, is not a matter of historical particularities or factual reality but of a particular quality of experience on the part of those who claimed to be followers of Jesus. For this reason, this description is seriously lacking in any substantial meaning.[27]

The End of Exclusivism

More specific descriptions of salvation have occupied the history of Christian thought. Hick notes the "controlling assumption" of many Protestant and Catholic views throughout history as "outside the Church, or outside Christianity, there is no salvation."[28] The impetus for what Hick terms the Copernican revolution lies in the apparent repugnance of the implications of such exclusivism:

> Can we then accept the conclusion that the God of love who seeks to save all mankind has nevertheless ordained that men must be saved in such a way that only a small minority can in fact receive this salvation?[29]

Hick notes a number of attempts to soften these "repugnant" conclusions. In particular some thinkers made exemptions for those wholly ignorant of Christ or the Church and others sought to include those who held some kind of implicit faith by desire or

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[25] Hick 1988b p.119
[26] Hick 1988b p.119
[27] For example, it is a description lacking any account of the atonement (but see Hick 1993a pp.112-126).
[28] Hick 1988b p.121
[29] Hick 1988b p.122

longing for something otherwise unknown.[30] Hick draws upon the scientific debate of the sixteenth century to illustrate how he perceives the salvation debate being resolved.[31]

Prior to the revolutionary work of Copernicus, Ptolemy has established a picture of the universe that had come to be understood as harmonious with the Bible account. According to the Ptolemaic picture, the earth existed at the centre of the universe with the stars, planets and sun revolving around it in concentric circles. The planets, however, created a problem in this picture because increasing knowledge of their movements indicated that they followed no such pattern. Consequently, astronomers introduced what were known as "epicycles" to accommodate these irregularities. The planets moved in smaller supplementary cycles during the course of their larger orbit of the earth. With the use of these epicycles, astronomers sought to maintain the Ptolemaic picture of the earth at the centre of the universe. However, increasingly accurate observation led to increasing numbers of epicycles being required to sustain this ancient world view until, eventually, the picture looked "artificial, implausible and

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[30] A nuanced and valuable account of the various positions adopted in the history of Christian thought is found in Sanders 1992. The variety of positions are schematised in D'Costa 1986a and Race 1993.

[31] The following account is a summary of Hick's reading of the revolution. He misunderstands both the factors involved in the revolution and the exact nature of the Papal response which was primarily a rejection of Galileo's application of Copernicus and not the published work of Copernicus which Church authorities permitted free discussion of. An accurate historical account is provided in Allen 1989 pp.27-49. The real issue between the Church authorities and Galileo was not the reliability of the Bible or the centrality of the earth to God's purposes but the truth of the Aristotelian world view which had come to dominate. The increasing orderliness and harmony of the great chain of being were received truth in the Aristotelian view and ruled out the possibility of decay in the heavenly realms such as that represented by sunspots on the surface of the sun (Also see Kuhn 1957). We simply note here the inadequacy of Hick's account but grant its usefulness as an analogy for the polemical point that he wishes to make.

unconvincing."[32] This paved the way for a great revolution in cosmological understanding as Copernicus arrived at the more plausible picture of the universe with the sun at the centre thus abandoning the need for epicycles to account for the movement of the planets.[33]

Hick draws upon this account as an analogy for the developments he identifies in Christian theology. The older theological picture of salvation as exclusive to the Church or Christianity is Ptolemaic. Christ or the Church are at the centre of the universe of religions with all others revolving around this centre. The inclusivist strategy of relating other religions to Christ through implicit desire for salvation or some other non-confessional approach[34] represents the attempt to develop 'epicycles' to account for the problem of plausibility in the theologically Ptolemaic world view. Hick presents his own position as a revolutionary change in perspective; a theological equivalent to the work of Copernicus.[35]

The Copernican revolution was essentially a change of perspective: "a transformation in the way in which men understood the universe and their location within it."[36] The

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[32] Hick 1988b p.125

[33] This, of course, was subsequently found to be wrong and the centre of the universe shifted elsewhere. Further complications in the movement of planets were caused by the influence of some planets on each other.

[34] Hick briefly surveys the work of Rahner, Küng and Pannenberg in Hick 1988b pp.127-130 but see also the accounts in D'Costa 1986a and 1993b.

[35] Lipner 1977 took issue with the polarisation of issues that Hick's use of Copernicus caused. He points out that Hick's basic assumption is that theologians are either absolutist and, therefore, Ptolemaic or pluralist and, therefore, Copernican. The only middle position is the interim attempt to offer epicycles. Lipner points out the error of transferring the word epicycle from science to theology. In the latter case what Hick refers to as epicycles are the attempts of theologians to develop a Christian theology of religions (Lipner 1977 p.257). See further Almond 1983.

[36] Hick 1988b p.130

religious change Hick calls for is a change of perspective in our religious understanding:

> It involves a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to the realisation that it is God who is at the centre, and that all the religions of mankind, including our own, serve and revolve around him.[37]

The Ptolemaic viewpoint is not limited to orthodox Christianity alone but finds home also among devout Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and others: "the adherent of each system of belief can assume that his own system is alone fully true and that all others are more or less true according as the approximate to or diverge from it."[38] Not only does Hick call Christians to change perspective but, also, the Ptolemaic believers of all religions are called into this revolution.

This treatment of Ptolemaic theology suggests an important problem. If the theologies of most devout people are, in some sense, Ptolemaic (though each claiming different centres) then how can one be sure that Hick's position will not be, itself, a Ptolemaic position? The analogy with the Copernican revolution fails at this point because the historical debate concerned two alternatives: either the earth at the centre with complex accounts of planetary motion or the sun at the centre with a less complex account required for planetary motion. The choice lay between two competing "exclusivisms". This is not the case with Hick's proposed Copernican revolution.

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[37] Hick 1988b p.131. We noted how the change in cosmological perspective did not end with the Copernican revolution as the centre of the universe shifted away from the earth to elsewhere in space. This change is also present in Hick's work as later speculation leads him to shift the religious centre away from God to the "Real" (D'Costa 1991 pp.3-16). This change is considered in detail later but, for the sake of clarity in exposition at this stage, I will continue to use "God" as Hick's designation for the new centre of religious faith.

[38] Hick 1988b p.132

Here the choice is between myriad centres of faith and the problem is why Hick should consider the choice of "God" as the centre of faiths to not be Ptolemaic whereas to acknowledge Jesus, Allah, Nirvana or Brahman as the centre is Ptolemaic. Hick's resolution of this problem, at this stage, is to describe the Copernican revolution in theology as the result of one having to

> stand back in thought from the arena of competing systems, surveying the scene as a whole, to see something that is hidden from the Ptolemaic believer.[39]

What Hick supposes to be hidden from the Ptolemaic believer is the fact that most believers tend to be adherents of the religion which informs their parents and their culture. This seems to add nothing to Hick's general point in favour of a revolution, namely the implausibility of adding epicycles to the Ptolemaic model. However, what is interesting here is the process by which Hick distinguishes the retention of a Ptolemaic world view and the adoption of a Copernican one. Essentially, it is a matter of "standing back". If one stands back from personal commitments and loyalties then one is able to survey all relevant factors as a whole in order to see a basic distinction between two alternatives - the Ptolemaic positions of mainstream religions and the Copernican shift of perspective through which they are all subjected to a new perspective. There is not an either/or choice between one model and another but a choice between loyalty to a religious perspective or distancing oneself altogether from any such loyalties. Hick fails to recognise the inappropriateness of his analogy because he fails to recognise that his own position is not a distinct alternative to exclusivisms but yet another exclusivism alongside the plurality of Ptolemaic religious believers he is so critical of.[40]

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[39] Hick 1988b p.132

[40] See D'Costa 1996c for an effective argument that Hick's position is another

With this general claim outlined Hick sets out a new 'map' of the history of religions. Rather than being an interpretation of religions from the perspective of one religion (a Ptolemaic approach) Hick provides an interpretation of religion from the "standing back" methodology commended by the Copernican revolution. In the next chapter we will interact in detail with a more recent statement of his epistemology. However, first we must consider whether Hick's later statement of the pluralist hypothesis marks a dramatic discontinuity in his work.

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exclusivism. Plantinga 1994 presents a defence of exclusivism in which he describes the inevitability of some exclusive beliefs.

(d) Continuity and Discontinuity

Hick has produced so much material in the course of his career it is understandable that there should be modifications and changes in his work. In this section we shall consider the major modification to his position, the Copernican Revolution, and assess its consistency with his epistemology.

Prefaces

Through our account of religious knowledge we have been concerned primarily with the position outlined in Faith and Knowledge (2nd Edition)[1] on the assumption that its fundamental argument remains a part of Hick's later thought. In the preface to the second edition Hick notes that despite having undergone substantial revision the book remains "an exposition of the view of faith which seemed to me, and still seems to me, most adequate"[2] and he also notes that the idea of eschatological verification remains in the argument though "now given a fuller treatment".[3]

In the reissue of the second edition a new preface is included in which Hick declares that with regard to his later work "Faith and Knowledge remains foundational".[4] Hick endorses the epistemological position laid out and restates his indebtedness to Kant and Schleiermacher.[5] Hick notes that his subsequent writings in philosophy of religion "proceeded in a natural trajectory from the [earlier] epistemology".[6] The use

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[1] Hick 1966. References in this thesis are from the 1988 reissue of the second edition (Hick 1988a). The first edition was published in 1957.
[2] Hick 1988a Preface to the Second Edition (1966) p.xi
[3] Hick 1988a Preface to the Second Edition (1966) p.xi
[4] Hick 1988a Preface to the reissue of the Second Edition (1988) p.vii
[5] Acknowledgment is also given to significance of Oman 1931 in Hick 1988a p.7
[6] Hick 1988a Preface to the reissue of the Second Edition (1988) p.ix

of the term 'trajectory' serves to indicate the continuity in Hick's philosophical work. However, with regard to his theology, Hick notes that the book assumes "a more traditional position than now seems to me sustainable".[7] The treatment of Hick's work as a whole in this thesis relies upon the substantial continuity of his work and the possibility that "the theology, whether old or new, does not affect the basic epistemological argument."[8] Consequently, Hick draws a marked distinction between his theology and his philosophical position. According to his self-description, substantial revisions in his theology have not altered his basic philosophical position.[9] However, a pressing problem remains regarding the extent to which Hick's work may be treated as a coherent whole.[10]

We shall now consider Hick's statement of religious belief and rationality as it appears in An Interpretation of Religion[11] as a comparison to the earlier statement previously considered. From this we will be able to isolate any significant developments or new emphases that may help in engaging with the debate concerning the continuity and discontinuity of Hick's work.

Refinements to the Epistemology

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[7] Hick 1988a Preface to the reissue of the Second Edition (1988) p.ix
[8] Hick 1988a Preface to the reissue of the Second Edition (1988) p.ix
[9] Substantial changes in Hick's theological thought have been given extensive treatment elsewhere. Biographical accounts suffice to give this information (see D'Costa 1987 pp.1-16, Gillis 1989 pp.28-30 and Sinkinson 1995a). For the purpose of my argument here it is not necessary to trace the historical changes in Hick's theological position.
[10] This is true not only of the relationship between his epistemology and the pluralist position but also of that between his theodicy and eschatology with his pluralist position. I shall only be concerned with the continuity of his epistemology and pluralism.
[11] Hick 1989a esp. pp.129-230

Hick asserts that the universe is ambiguous with regard to its meaning because it is open to both religious and non-religious interpretations.[12] However, this gives rise to an interesting epistemological tension between the theoretical and practical dimensions in our interpretation of reality. Reality must be "understood, experienced and inhabited in a particular way" though it "retains its ambiguity for the intellect".[13] This implies that the ambiguity of the universe is not an interpretation we may choose to make but an assumption that underlies any interpretation we adopt. Ambiguity functions as a presupposition of the particular interpretation we live by. Consequently, there is a form of agnosticism regarding the nature of reality held in tension with the particular interpretation adopted by the human subject:

> For whilst the objective ambiguity of our environment consists in the fact that it is capable of being interpreted in a variety of ways, its consciously experienced and actively lived-in character consists in its actually being interpreted as meaningful in a particular way which, whilst it operates, excludes other possible ways.[14]

Epistemology is, then, the adoption of a particular meaning in order to understand the universe and "to find it intelligible .... in the practical sense that one is able to behave appropriately (or in a way that one takes to be appropriate) in relation to it".[15] The adoption of a particular meaning requires the practical exclusion of alternative meanings but, nonetheless, includes the intellectual admission that the universe is itself fundamentally ambiguous and open to a variety of possible interpretations.

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[12] Hick 1989a p.129
[13] Hick 1989a p.129
[14] Hick 1989a p.129
[15] Hick 1989a p.131

Hick also re-affirms the threefold division of levels of interpretation with regard to the universe. These are the levels of the natural or physical, the personal or ethical, and the awareness of the divine.[16] He describes each level of meaning in terms of the practical behavioural responses to which they give rise. The appropriate behavioural responses generated by natural meaning are essentially actions of self-preservation; "to avoid mortal danger".[17] There is of course no reason why an organism might not adopt a policy of self-annihilation but the fact that organisms have a will to survive means that there is a basic dispositional aim which provides a standard by which appropriate and inappropriate behaviour may be assessed.

The choice of moral and aesthetic[18] meaning in relation to reality will also depend upon a presupposed disposition to behave in a certain way. The basic disposition upon which ethical behaviour is based is the recognition that another person is an independent and equally valid source of consciousness in relation to ourselves. Failure to relate to people in this way is a moral failure; "I can only be aware of the bare neutral existence of a fellow human being if I have degraded that being in my own eyes from a thou to an it."[19] The moral failure is the result of experiencing another as a thing rather than as a person. When social relationships are interpreted in terms of I-it rather than I-thou[20] then one has failed to climb the stairway of experience from natural meaning to ethical meaning.

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16 Hick 1989a pp.133-134
17 Hick 1989a p.139
18 As a matter of fact Hick barely considers aesthetic meaning, treating it as analogous to ethical meaning but involving a concern with quality rather than duty or obligation. Hick 1989a pp.151-152
19 Hick 1989a p.145
20 Hick acknowledges his indebtedness to Buber 1937 in Hick 1989a p.145

The third level of interpretation is that of religious meaning. Religious meaning arises with the experience "generated at the interface between the Real and the human psyche."[21] This experience takes two forms. The first is an experience of the "presence of the transcendent"[22] mediated through events or objects in the material world while the second is a direct experience of the divine.

Religious meaning requires an uncompelled act of interpretation on the part of the human subject in order to make sense of an otherwise ambiguous reality. The Christian act of interpretation is a particular example of this:

> Thus the Christian response to Jesus was and is an uncompelled interpretation, experiencing an ambiguous figure in a distinctive way as mediating the transforming presence of God.[23]

The interpretation of reality or an aspect of reality (such as the shadowy historical figure of Jesus) as of religious significance "occurs at the deeper level of the cognitive choice whereby we come to experience in either a religious or a non-religious way."[24] Faith is not the result of experience so much as the ground of experience. Faith provides the framework in which experience occurs. In this way, faith is a new category operating analogously to the Kantian categories of space and time.[25] It is "that uncompelled subjective contribution to conscious experience which is responsible for its distinctively religious character."[26] Hick reiterates the continuity

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[21] Hick 1989a pp.153-154. The "Real" being Hick's chosen designation for the ultimate divine reality at the centre of the orbiting religions.
[22] Hick 1989a p.154
[23] Hick 1989a p.157
[24] Hick 1989a p.159
[25] A point explored further when we examine the relationship of Kant's work to Hick in Chapter 4.
[26] Hick 1989a p.160

between each level of meaning found in reality and the corresponding increase in the degree of epistemic freedom relative to each level.

From Ambiguity to Plurality

The major point of departure for Hick's epistemology as he develops it in the wake of Faith and Knowledge[27] and as it is crystallised in An Interpretation of Religion is the assertion of a pluralist theology of religions.[28] Before we consider this in detail we will outline the way in which Hick is able to develop a pluralist account in continuity with his epistemology.

Hick identifies the value of maintaining cognitive freedom in religious faith as its ability to "protect our finite freedom and autonomy."[29] Our finitude must necessarily limit the capacity for information that we are able to process and this is no more clearly felt than in relation to religious belief where knowledge can only be partial and selective. Religious traditions are to be understood as communal statements of this partial knowledge:

> Religious traditions, considered as 'filters' or 'resistances', function as totalities which include not only concepts and images of God or of the Absolute, with the modes of experience which they inform, but also systems of doctrine, ritual and myth, art forms, moral codes, lifestyles and patterns of social organisation.[30]

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[27] See especially Hick 1972, 1983a, 1983b, 1985 and Hick 1988b as statements of the pluralist position prior to Hick 1989a.
[28] A term defined and extrapolated in contrast to theologies of religion where Christ is in some way normative in D'Costa 1986a, 1986b and Race 1993.
[29] Hick 1989a p.162 cf. Chapter 2 (a) Figure 4
[30] Hick 1989a p.163

The images used here indicate that the purpose of a religion is not to divulge otherwise unobtainable information (as in Catholic Propositionalism) but, rather, to filter the vast array of chaotic and ambiguous information such that a partial but meaningful aspect of reality is disclosed. Like a resistor in an electronic circuit, a religion prevents a damaging and unhelpful overload of current (information) by restraining most incoming energy. A religion provides the conceptual apparatus to order and make sense of the reality with which humans must deal.

Hick relates each level of interpretation to the practical consequences of adopting any given interpretation. Only a limited range of practical options may be adopted in response to natural significance. This explains the relative success of technology and medicine to transcend cultural differences. An interpretation of the physical order may be tested and found false with reference to the inappropriate behaviour that it may inspire. Immoral ethical interpretations may, similarly, give rise to destructive social implications. Hick extends the notion of appropriateness and practical dispositions to the criterion for religious truth:

> In a word, the central criterion will be soteriological, the bringing about of a transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centredness - a transformation which shows itself, within the conditions of this world, in compassion (*karuna*) or love (*agape*).[31]

Because Hick has rejected the propositionalist account of faith it is entirely consistent for his position to become praxis-oriented rather than information-oriented. The truth of a religious tradition is not to be understood in terms of truth claims (information) but in terms of soteriological transformation of individuals and communities.

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[31] Hick 1989a p.164

Critics of Continuity

Various arguments have been made in attempts to establish or deny the coherence or continuity of Hick's work when it is treated as a corpus. Some of these attempts involve misunderstandings while other attempts are of crucial significance.

Loughlin has proved an unrelenting critic of Hick's work and has drawn attention to the major incoherencies of Hick's project.[32] We shall review this criticism in order to assess the difficulties of treating the corpus of Hick's work as a whole.

Prefacing Pluralism

Macmillan reissued many of Hick's major works in 1988, each with a new preface. This major publishing venture occurred one year prior to the publication of An Interpretation of Religion. Consequently, an impression is given that the corpus of Hick's work forms a coherent whole.[33] The use of prefaces compounds this impression by allowing Hick the space in which to become "the narrator of Hick's texts".[34] By becoming narrator, Loughlin describes Hick as re-writing his own work into a single system. By becoming narrator, radical changes in his position in respect of Christology and theodicy may be smoothed into a coherent whole rather than being confessed as total revolutions in his thought. Loughlin explores this problem of apparent continuity and underlying discontinuity in the light of three "moments" of thought: Epistemology, Christology and Theodicy.[35]

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[32] Loughlin 1986a, 1990 and 1991

[33] This is the assumption underlying the present thesis and the reason why the 1988 text of Faith and Knowledge is used.

[34] Loughlin 1990 p.30

[35] Loughlin 1990 p.31

Regarding epistemology, Loughlin considers Hick's sustained use of eschatological verification and shows three distinct phases in its employment.

(1) 1957: The first statement of the principle, in Faith and Knowledge, was a response to logical positivism and maintained that post-mortem experience of the Kingdom of God would constitute verification of Christian theism. Such verification provided the basis for the claim that theistic language is meaningful.

(2) 1966: In the second edition of Faith and Knowledge Hick relates the person of Christ to the Kingdom of God "in order to render explicit its Christian character".[36] Rather than permit the Kingdom to be understood in empty terms Hick relocates it in specific Christian terms.

(3) 1977: Rather than continue the relation between verification and Christ, Hick severed the connection and described the eschaton as the unambiguous encounter with the divine presence.[37] As such, it may not verify anything specific in this life after all. Christianity is too specific a formulation of such a hope of encounter for it to be seen as open to verification in any privileged sense. D'Costa has drawn attention to this continuing movement in Hick's work away from a tradition specific notion of fulfilment in the eschaton toward a more general sense of verification. In this movement he describes Hick's revised principle in his 1989 work as "minimalist" because it disqualifies "specific details of eschatological expectations."[38]

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[36] Loughlin 1990 p.32
[37] Loughlin 1990 p.32
[38] D'Costa 1991 p.7

Eschatological verification is based on the same basic epistemic-linguistic rules as logical positivism. Loughlin claims that Hick is mistaken to accept such basic ground rules: "God is not any-thing .... and the empiricist framework will permit the verification of only things."[39] Furthermore, he argues that Hick always knew this to be mistaken because he assumed that faith found immediate justification in religious experience - no further verification has ever been necessary. This raises the question of why Hick should then still see a need to retain the principle.

Concerning Christology, Loughlin draws attention to two very different accounts embedded in Hick's work. Hick has presented a functional account of the incarnation in terms of *agapé*: the love of God and the love of Christ were qualitatively one. However, he also explains the incarnation in terms of its quality as mythology rather than metaphysics. According to the *agapé* Christology, when a believer uses such Christocentric language they are, in fact, using a mythology to express their religious experience. Loughlin points out that Hick is able to retain both of these accounts within one moment "by drawing a distinction between *presenting* and *explaining* the doctrine."[40] Hick *presents* the doctrine in terms of *agapé* but *explains* the doctrine in terms of mythology. However, the mythological account cancels out the force of the 'presented' doctrine. If all accounts of the incarnation are mythological (expressive of feeling rather than metaphysics) then there is little reason for finding a new way of presenting the doctrine.

The change in Hick's position is made strikingly clear in his theodicy. Loughlin charts the change from a Christian theodicy, through a theistic theodicy ("no longer a matter

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[39] Loughlin 1990 p.33
[40] Loughlin 1990 p.35

of a specific faith but of a general belief"[41]) to a theodicy in keeping with the pluralist shift from God to the 'divine'. However, this change of position is assisted by the introduction of the mythological account of religious language that allows Hick to re-interpret his previous work on theodicy:

> Hick is able to stand back sufficiently far from his own Irenaean theodicy to see that it is also a myth, just like Augustine's theodicy. He is able to apply to his theodicy the mythographical analysis he had formerly applied only to his *agapé* Christology.[42]

As we noted with Hick's Christology, his theodicy is also emptied of decisive content. Whether Irenaean or Augustinian, theodices are myths expressing religious experience rather than being metaphysical explanations.

Loughlin draws attention to Hick's inability to apply the notion of myth consistently and interpret the pluralist hypothesis as the "myth" of religious pluralism.[43] Loughlin's point is that by interpreting religious truth claims as mythology Hick's own system ought, logically, to be cast as another myth. The problems attendant on Hick's use of myth will concern us later[44] but the issue here is the claim that to maintain the continuity of his literary corpus Hick has had to interpret the claims of his earlier work through the device of myth by which he empties them of all significant content.

Loughlin is critical of both the content and the method of Hick's project finding underlying discontinuity in both. Concerning content, Hick attempts to systematise the contents of all major post-axial religions in terms of "a single coherence and

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[41] Loughlin 1990 p.36
[42] Loughlin 1990 p.37
[43] Loughlin 1990 p.38
[44] Chapter 5 (b)

continuity: the reduction of plurality to pluralism."[45] Concerning method, Hick pursues an ill-conceived *ad hoc* task of sewing together a "patchwork of texts"[46] that do not belong to each other but for that which Loughlin identifies as the "authorial force"[47] which unites them.

The substance of Loughlin's criticism is that Hick fails to recognise how radical a revision has been made. The texts of the past no longer belong to him as if he were the creator of a grand philosophical system. Rather, each major[48] text in Hick's project discards all that went before. If Loughlin's thesis is correct then this present attempt to treat Hick's work in terms of the unitive theme of the justification of knowledge would be flawed. There are two important critical responses to Loughlin that we will consider here. The first of these is Hick's own response.

Hick's Response

Hick clearly reacts in an unfavourable way to the style of Loughlin's article understanding him to be interpreting the prefaces as "an extraordinary - even fantastic - literary conspiracy theory".[49] In response, Hick claims that each preface draws attention to both the developments and the continuities of his own position.

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[45] Loughlin 1990 p.48
[46] Loughlin 1990 p.48
[47] Loughlin 1990 p.47
[48] It is not clear in this particular article whether Loughlin intends us to understand every text in this way or only those texts that mark a new departure for Hick - this would primarily mean each issue of Faith and Knowledge and Evil and the God of Love along with the inter-play between God and the Universe of Faiths and An Interpretation of Religion.
[49] Hick 1990b p.57

Concerning epistemology, Hick denies that his use of eschatological verification is at its heart. Rather, it is an important principle as "the crux between a realist and non-realist construal of religious language."[50] While the agenda has been set by the logical positivists, the meaningfulness of religious language remains in debate and to address this debate Hick retains a modified form of the principle. Consequently, the principle addresses realism and language rather than, *contra* Loughlin's interpretation, the justification of belief. Loughlin's comment that religion provides its own verification meets with Hick's disapproval for this would suggest that religion concerns only matters internal to its own system. Verification must not remain internal but should be measured "by its appropriateness to the nature of reality".[51] The dialogue is somewhat confused at this point between the problem of justification and that of verification. Hick clearly does retain the notion of verification as something that will take place in the future because it is a public event. It is not available at the moment because it is not open to individual or even communal access. The verification can only occur at a future time when there will be global access to the verifying event. However, Hick has a distinct notion of justification that is available now and is not dependent on being publicly accessible. Hick's concept of justification is a private matter. One can be justified in one's belief now regardless of external evidence. Loughlin uses the term "confirmation"[52] in his article to identify this aspect of Hick's work and the distinction of terms seems to underlie the confusion at this point. His accusation that Hick is inconsistent in his use of eschatological verification and experiential justification rests on the confusion of these two distinct elements in Hick's epistemology.

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[50] Hick 1990b p.59
[51] Hick 1990b p.61
[52] Loughlin 1990 p.33

Concerning Christology, Hick maintains that Loughlin is mistaken to regard his *agapé* account of the incarnation as a reversal of his earlier critique of Baillie. A reversal did occur, but later, "somewhere in the late 1970's"[53] when the *agapé* account had largely been abandoned. This reversal could not constitute a contradiction because by this stage Hick was no longer attempting to hold together his earlier *agapé* account with the later form of the pluralist hypothesis. In his response, Hick barely deals with Loughlin's objections regarding his use of myth, conceding that it is a "highly elastic concept" but simply maintaining that it remains "a coherent and useful notion."[54]

Hick is willing to admit a substantial change with regard to his theodicy. The change concerns the application of his mythological treatment of theology to theodicy in particular with the result that "it speaks in human terms of that which transcends the scope of our human conceptualities."[55] However, Hick considers this a legitimate development of his work rather than an inconsistency. This suggests that Loughlin's criticism here finds its mark. The reissue of Evil and the God of Love may give the impression that the same theodicy is being stated whereas, from Hick's analysis of religious language, we know that the restatement also constitutes a reinterpretation such that the theodicy has no immediate metaphysical implications.

The Development of Pluralism

Barnes has made useful observations on the exchange between Loughlin and Hick that will cast further light on the question of continuity and discontinuity in Hick's work. Barnes notes three senses in which the word 'development' may be used:

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[53] Hick 1990b p.61
[54] Hick 1990b pp.61-62. The myth debate is given more attention by Loughlin and Hick in Hewitt 1991. Cf. Chapter 5 (d).
[55] Hick 1990b p.62

> drawing out and making explicit what was originally implicit; rejecting what has gone before; or, finally, expanding one's position by the incorporation of new insights, arguments and ideas.[56]

Hick's theological position develops in all of these ways but whether they engender inconsistencies in his position is a distinct question. Barnes disputes Loughlin's contention that there is a clear contrast between an early and a later Hick position. Rather than discontinuity, Barnes argues for continuity:

> Hick's theology should be interpreted as the increasingly systematic drawing out of his initial starting point rather than being divided into two different and opposing parts.[57]

Barnes suggests that the reason for Loughlin's mistake is that he identifies too readily Hick's epistemology with the principle of eschatological verification.[58] Echoing Hick's own response to Loughlin on this point,[59] Barnes draws attention to the coherent use made of "experiencing-as" throughout Hick's work.[60]

After describing Hick's use of experiencing-as in his early work, Barnes traces its development. The term was introduced in the Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture series given in 1967-68 but described the same account of faith present in the first edition of Faith and Knowledge. Each statement of his epistemology (the editions of Faith and Knowledge along with the Royal Institute lectures) comprised of a rejection

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[56] Barnes 1992 p.395
[57] Barnes 1992 p.396
[58] This objection applies also to Mathis 1985 in which the incoherence of Hick's developing notion of eschatological verification is used to fault his thesis.
[59] " .... the central theme of my epistemology is the concept of experiencing-as ...." Hick 1990b p.59
[60] Barnes 1992 p.396

of faith as belief in the truth of verbal propositions and an affirmation of faith as the interpretative element in human experience. In later works Hick deals with the problem of competing interpretations by drawing attention to the ambiguity of evidence and the necessity of personal confirmatory experience.[61] Furthermore, in An Interpretation of Religion Barnes notes that "the same basic epistemology is retained".[62]

Barnes suggests that the reason for Loughlin's appraisal of Hick in terms of discontinuity is that he understands Christology as the key to interpreting Hick's theology. Clearly, Hick made a major change of position regarding the person of Christ and he freely admits this change. One may question the extent to which this change affects the fundamental continuity of Hick's corpus of work. In contrast to Loughlin, Hick and Barnes claim that the radical change in Christology does not change the basic coherence of Hick's corpus.[63]

Barnes provides a helpful analysis of why Hick's work remains systematic. The essential reason is that Christology has only ever played a subsidiary role in Hick's work. Loughlin's objections would apply to most Christian theologians. Given a substantial revision of the doctrine of Christ one would expect a substantial revision throughout that particular theology. In Hick's case his epistemology in no way relies upon his Christology:

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[61] Barnes draws attention to Hick 1977b and Hick 1970

[62] Barnes 1992 p.399

[63] Barnes 1992 and Loughlin 1990 discuss Hick's work in terms of a two stage development. D'Costa suggests that Hick is better understood in terms of three crucial stages. He moved from "*Christocentrism* to *theocentrism* to a *Realocentrism*." (D'Costa 1991 p.5) Though this is a helpful analysis it also fails to draw out the clear continuity of Hick's epistemology which, as we shall discuss in Chapter 3, has always carried the seeds of agnosticism.

> Christology had virtually no part to play in Hick's analysis of the nature of Christian faith, as he presents it in Faith and Knowledge: it was not an integral part of his epistemology of Christian belief.[64]

Changes in Christological formulation need have no effect on Hick's epistemology precisely because his epistemology bears no intrinsic relation either to Christian theology in general or to Christology in particular. The incoherence of Hick's major corpus of work cannot be argued for on the basis of changes in Christology or theodicy.

Epistemology is the key element in Hick's work that has remained constant and lends coherence to his 'system'. Barnes gives reason to understand the later developed pluralism as a legitimate development of his early epistemology of religious knowledge. In particular, "his account of the epistemological character of faith can be divorced from the specific content of faith."[65] Pluralism is not only a legitimate development of this epistemology but a logical or necessary outcome:

> Once the shift is made to construing religion exclusively in terms of internal experience which is not susceptible to external or public assessment .... the reported encounters with 'the Real' in other religions should likewise be regarded by [Hick] as genuine.[66]

Barnes makes the crucial point that to adopt Hick's epistemology is to implicitly commit oneself to the pluralist position. The former leads inexorably to the latter. We shall see how this must be in the next chapter.

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[64] Barnes 1992 p.400
[65] Barnes 1992 p.401
[66] Barnes 1992 p.401

Philosophical Continuity and Theological Discontinuity

Loughlin emphasises discontinuity in Hick's position because his interpretation rests upon a theological treatment of Hick. Of the three areas he considers two are distinctively the arena of Christian theology; Christology and theodicy. However, even his treatment of epistemology is essentially a discussion of eschatology - the theological dimension of Hick's otherwise non-theological account. Loughlin notes the radical discontinuity of Hick's theological position with regard to eschatology, the person of Jesus and the problem of evil. If one understands his theology to be marginal to his main project of attempting to produce a theologically neutral apologetic for faith then this discontinuity loses significance. In terms of epistemology, Hick's philosophical position remains largely consistent. The distinction between theology and philosophy is very important at this point in the analysis. Because Hick's work is a deliberate attempt to avoid rooting his assumptions in any particular confessional framework the result must be a work of philosophy rather than theology. The very term 'theology' implies a tradition specific to theism which Hick is keen to depart from dependence upon. The earliest expressions of his epistemology were quite capable of bearing the weight of the pluralist hypothesis.[67]

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[67] Shaw 1985 also documents the fundamental continuity of Hick's epistemology which he describes as an evolutionary monist scheme in which human experience interacts with the natural order that in turn enables experience to evolve beyond purely natural/physical categories. This conceptual scheme is able to adapt to a plurality of possible doctrinal expressions (pp.74-76).

Chapter 3 Ambiguity and the Rationality of Religion

(a) Christian Faith and Religious Faith

We have now established the substantial continuity in Hick's epistemological position despite dramatic revolutions in his theology. Hick's account of faith is, in essence, a theory of knowledge. We shall now consider Hick's shift from an account of faith specific to one tradition (Christian faith) to one compatible with a plurality of traditions (religious faith) and how he achieves this with minimal effect on the theoretical foundations he has formulated. At this level of discussion, the 'shift' is superficial: Hick has never maintained anything other than a non-tradition specific sense of religious faith. This discussion has two sections; first we treat the particularity of 'Christian Faith' and then its submerging into the general category of 'Religious Faith'.

1. Christian Faith

With reference to the stair diagram we have noted that Hick describes faith as a level of interpretation similar to, though superseding, interpretations of the universe in terms of material structure and moral significance. As such, faith (along with natural and moral levels of interpretation) may be described as a human act of response to environment. We may question the sense in which this is an act of *Christian* faith.

1.1 Faith and the Personal God

Hick claims that faith relates us to a unique 'object'.[1] As a total interpretation of our surroundings it relates us to an objectively existing God:

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[1] Hick 1988a p.97

> enfolding and interpenetrating this interlocking mass of finite situations there is also, according to the insistent witness of theistic religion, the all-encompassing situation of being in the presence of God and within the sphere of an on-going divine purpose.[2]

This description of faith depends upon a theistic framework of interpretation in which it makes sense to speak of God being present and having purposes. Hick emphasises the realist sense in which he identifies God as the object of faith. The God of faith is not simply 'the divine' but a being capable of purpose and presence. This personal nature of God is emphasised by Hick in his account of the freedom of faith. He uses the analogy of human relationships to describe the difference between an I-It relationship and an I-Thou relationship. The latter better presents theistic faith. The analogy with personal human relationships draws upon the example of a situation where we have been discussing someone, in their absence, as an object of concern, when they enter the room:

> We can no longer treat them as a specimen to be dissected, for he manifestly stands on an equal footing with ourselves as a separate mind and will, an unique personality ....[3]

Hick pursues this analogy by pressing the voluntary nature of personal relationships which coheres with his voluntarist description of faith.[4] The important point here is that Hick's understanding of faith is based upon a concept of a personal God as the object of faith. This gives us reason to treat Hick's account of faith as a specifically Christian description.

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[2] Hick 1988a p.107
[3] Hick 1988a p.129
[4] See Chapter 2 (a)

1.2 Faith and Jesus Christ

In his earlier work on faith, Hick considered a personal relationship with God to be the pinnacle of religious experience. The history of religions had been marked by "gradual liberation"[5] of individuals from group mentality to a sense of the personal divine mind calling him or her into free relationship. The doctrine of the incarnation is the "classic exemplification of this principle".[6] Hence, he describes Jesus Christ as the culmination of this gradual process of God revealing himself.[7]

> In Christianity the catalyst of faith is the person of Jesus Christ. It is in the historical figure of Jesus the Christ that, according to the Christian claim, God has in an unique and final way disclosed himself to men.[8]

Hick distinguishes two senses in which faith is related to Christ: faith *in* and faith *from* Christ. Faith *in* Christ is the act of interpreting the historical Jesus as the Christ. Faith *from* Christ concerns the interpretation of the universe from the new-found Christological perspective.[9] This is a Christian description because it relates faith directly to the person and message of the historical Jesus.

1.3 Faith and Works

Hick also sees his analysis of faith as providing resources for understanding the relationship between faith and works and this brings us to the crucial ethical basis for faith. While Christ's teachings concerning morality involve certain rules, nonetheless, the purpose of the morality is more than to simply lay down rules:

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[5] Hick 1988a p.139
[6] Hick 1988a p.140
[7] Hick 1988a p.139
[8] Hick 1988a p.216 Hick provides a defence of the orthodox doctrine of the incarnation pp.219-228
[9] Hick 1988a p.218

> But Jesus' critique of the Law arises from his perception that the kingdom is extended not merely by securing conformity of men's overt deeds to a stated code, but by changing people themselves.[10]

Hick argues that there is an integral connection between faith and works. Christian faith involves a new interpretation of reality which precipitates a radical transformation of one's very nature.[11] Hick does not envisage Christian faith as an assent to belief without practical implications.

The Distinctive Features of Christian Faith

There are three aspects of Hick's earlier presentation of faith that suggest he is describing a distinctive Christian faith. Firstly, faith relates people to a personal God in an I-Thou relationship of love, presence and purpose. Secondly, faith is both exemplified and made possible by Jesus Christ. Thirdly, faith is integrated with a lifestyle transformed by Christ's teachings. However, Hick's description does not depend upon a Christian theology. We shall now examine the non-tradition specific sense of faith that underlies even his early work. This will then provide a bridge for us to cross into the epistemology of his later work.[12]

2. Religious Faith

Hick offers his work on faith and epistemology as appropriate for theists, agnostics and atheists though, of course, each of these groupings will regard the significance of faith quite differently: "we start from what is for the theist the conviction, for the

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[10] Hick 1988a p.241

[11] Hick 1988a p.240 cf. Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew Ch. 5-8).

[12] Primarily expressed in Hick 1989a. We shall see that the Faith and Knowledge thesis needs but minor modification to be adopted as congruous with this later work.

agnostic the hypothesis, and for the atheist the delusion that God exists."[13] Hick does not claim that his work offers any attempt to settle the question of the factuality or otherwise of the existence of God. His philosophical account of the nature of faith does not depend on his readers taking any particular position regarding the existence of God. However, Hick does concede that the question he tackles is contained within certain parameters by the fact that he is considering awareness of one God rather than many gods. His chosen field is monotheistic rather than polytheistic. Furthermore, he describes the field to be the ethical monotheism of the Judeo-Christian tradition:

> For this book is not a comprehensive treatment of the place of faith in the religions of the world, but only an essay on the epistemology of faith as it occurs in that form of religion which constitutes a live option for most of the participants in our Western stream of culture.[14]

This suggests that Hick is dealing only with faith as conceived in the major religion or religions of the west. However, as a matter of fact, the significance of the "live option" he describes is primarily of illustrative significance. While the theories of faith with which Hick engages are within the Christian tradition, the framework in which the discussion is conducted is that of philosophical descriptions of human cognition. He describes his aim as an inquiry "into the manner and structure of the religious person's supposed awareness of the divine"[15] which comprises a careful avoidance of tradition specific terms. The epistemological structure of faith that Hick develops does not depend in any substantial sense on the truth of Christian revelation. In contrast, it is an account of faith that applies to any description of how people come to believe in a supernatural significance of the universe. The three step epistemology

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[13] Hick 1988a p.2
[14] Hick 1988a p.2
[15] Hick 1988a p.1

of nature, ethics and the divine owe nothing uniquely to Christian belief.[16] Hick is committed to a philosophically neutral categorisation of the religious mind in his work. In his early work Hick assumes that Christianity is the best or highest exemplification of faith but he is certainly not committed to ruling out alternative valid expressions of faith. In terms of the defence of faith Hick is primarily engaged in a defence of the concept of religious knowledge but not necessarily to any particular expression of it. We shall now see that the publication of An Interpretation of Religion[17] required no great amendment to his epistemology but, rather, a simplification of it to its logical essence.

2.1 Faith and Ambiguity

Hick continues to maintain that the universe is religiously ambiguous.[18] By this he means that we are not morally or logically compelled to adopt one particular interpretation of the universe. This ambiguity is not peculiar to religious belief but is rooted in the structure of knowledge itself. Even in the case of natural meaning, "we can never compare the world as it appears in consciousness with the postulated world as it exists independently of its impact upon our human sensory and nervous systems"[19] and, as a consequence, we cannot claim to know directly that the meaning we impose upon the world (by the act of interpretation) is correct. Nonetheless, the

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[16] An indication of that fact that Christianity illustrates rather than determines Hick's thesis is to be found in his use of the scripture references. The Bible is quoted directly 83 times in Hick 1988a. Of these, 80 are to be found in the final part in which Hick brings his theory to bear on Christian belief (pp.213-263) while just 3 are found in the bulk of the work in which Hick develops an epistemology for faith. This is not a criticism in itself but does provide evidence for the argument that Hick's description of faith is a philosophical account illustrated by the distinctiveness of Christianity but not arising from them.

[17] Hick 1989a

[18] Hick 1989a p.129.

[19] Hick 1989a p.135

meaning we come to adopt will determine our lifestyle in relation to our environment (the physical analogy of the faith and works relationship) and lifestyles may be tested by the pragmatic qualities of whether they enable one "to live successfully" or are "self-destructive".[20] Furthermore, there are only a very narrow band of parameters regarding what might constitute viable natural meanings:

> Thus at this level our cognitive freedom is minimal; the physical world compels us to interpret its signals correctly and to live in it in terms of its real meaning for beings such as ourselves.[21]

In this manner Hick establishes what will become a crucial connection between interpretation and experience. The interpretation of the world will be the result not of guesswork, which could have disastrous results, but of engagement with and experience of the world.

2.2 Faith and Experience

The connection is made by Hick with the term 'experiencing-as'. This is a development from Wittgenstein's concept of 'seeing-as' though Hick applies the concept more broadly so that it covers not just odd moments of experience but all of our experience:

> But I want to argue that all conscious experiencing, including seeing, is experiencing-as: not only, for example seeing the protuberance - erroneously - as a squirrel, but also seeing it correctly as a knobble on the branch.[22]

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[20] Hick 1989a p.135
[21] Hick 1989a p.137
[22] Hick 1989a p.140.

The greater complexities of ethics and aesthetics give rise to a more pronounced sense of ambiguity and religious beliefs even more so. However, underlying all experience is the fundamental ambiguity overcome only by the act of interpretation on the part of the human subject.

According to Hick's analysis there is a fundamental connection between faith and experience. In his earlier work Jesus functions for Christians as the source of faith but now his significance is relativised. Hick uses Jastrow's famous Duck-Rabbit puzzle to describe the creative act of interpretation.[23] He then applies this to the place of Jesus in Christian faith:

> Thus the Christian response to Jesus was and is an uncompelled interpretation, experiencing an ambiguous figure in a distinctive way as mediating the transforming presence of God.[24]

Christ is the object of religious faith for Christians and other objects of faith are subject to the interpretations of religious people in other traditions. The world process is itself the object of Buddhist interpretation - open to reinterpretation as either the "stream of life, death and rebirth" or "in a radically different way it is Nirvana!"[25] So we see the same process of an ambiguous object finding order, significance and meaning through the interpretative faculties of faith. Religious experience provides the cause for the interpretation of the universe in terms of religious meaning.

2.3 Faith and the World Religions

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[23] Cf. Hick 1989a p.140
[24] Hick 1989a p.157
[25] Hick 1989a p.157

In Hick's earlier work we noted that Christianity provided primary illustrative material for his account of faith. In his later work he distances himself from any specific world religion and provides an account of the function of faith in all religions. He suggests that it would be destructive for a finite human being "to have imposed upon it a more extensive or intensive awareness than it is able to assimilate."[26] Therefore, reality must be shaped in some form to prevent an overload of information that would overwhelm the human subject. It is religious traditions that act as the cognitive 'filters' or 'resistances' of the vast array of information available.[27] Most of the major post-axial world religions function in this way. Christianity does not provide either a unique or a supreme source of knowledge for faith.

Faith as the Religious Outlook

Hick maintains the three levels of interpretation and describes religious interpretation as a 'total' interpretation subsuming interpretations of both the natural order and of ethics. However, he describes faith in general religious terms rather than in terms of specific Christian belief. In doing so he makes clear the underlying continuity of his epistemological position despite significant changes in his theological outlook. His apologetic provides a justification of religious faith as a general category. The primary reason why Hick believes such an apologetic to be necessary is because faith asserts something in the face of the religious ambiguity of the universe.

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[26] Hick 1989a p.162
[27] Hick 1989a p.163

(b) Ambiguity and Scepticism

The religious ambiguity of the universe is an important ground in Hick's case for cognitive freedom. The primary difference between natural meaning and religious meaning is that in the former the "margin of cognitive freedom" is a "narrow one"[1] whereas in the latter cognitive freedom is "at a maximum".[2] Hick provided theological substantiation for this idea in his earlier work with reference to the personal nature of God and the importance of truly personal relationships being uncompelled.[3] Because God desires that humans exercise free will in their choosing to love him, Hick describes God as "hiding himself behind his creation".[4] According to his argument, for God to provide total proof of his existence would be for God to manipulate and coerce the human will. Various objections have been raised to this argument and we shall consider them further below.[5] However, the sense in which God is personal is also subjected to rigorous revision in later work and consequently this theological appeal no longer carries the same weight.

Radical Ambiguity as a Basis for Pluralism

In order to sustain the case for a pluralist interpretation of religion Hick must provide a fresh treatment of the necessary religious ambiguity of the universe. Consideration will now be given to Hick's new case for ambiguity and then a comparison will be drawn with a brief account of the sceptic methodology.

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[1] Hick 1988a p.123
[2] Hick 1988a p.128
[3] Hick provides three theological reasons to dispense with the "proofs" for the existence of God of which one is the coercion of belief they would imply. Badham 1990 pp.50-54 (cf. Hick 1967).
[4] Hick 1988a p.135
[5] See Chapter 3 (c).

The fundamental ambiguous aspect of the universe is its potential for being interpreted "in both religious and naturalistic ways".[6] Until the western Enlightenment Hick notes that intellectual thought had been dominated by religious world views but, in its wake, he describes the rising plausibility of various forms of naturalism. Hick does not argue that the universe is structurally ambiguous in itself but that all interpretation of the universe, being the creative act of free human subjects, is uncompelled. This, according to Hick, is something we have come to notice as heirs of the Enlightenment: "And in this post-Enlightenment age of doubt we have realised that the universe is religiously ambiguous. It evokes and sustains non-religious as well as religious responses."[7] However, Hick does not wish simply to defend the weak point that the universe is as a matter of empirical fact interpreted in various ways and is, therefore, ambiguous. Such a sense of ambiguity only states the obvious about diversity in human culture but sheds no light on the nature of the epistemic relationship between human beings and the universe. Hick's account of ambiguity leads on to a claim that these different interpretations are "alike rationally defensible".[8] Philosophical arguments for or against any fundamental position must then necessarily be inconclusive.

Hick proceeds to give consideration to various arguments offered within the western theological tradition both for and against the existence of God.[9] These need not detain us in detail. The ontological argument is "refuted by Kant's counter-argument" that "existence is not a predicate" and therefore no object may be defined into existence.[10]

[6] Hick 1989a p.73
[7] Hick 1989a p.74
[8] Hick 1989a p.74
[9] See also Hick 1970
[10] Hick 1989a p.75

Cosmological arguments may not be open to formal refutation but Hick points out that they are unable to address the question why one should not accept that the universe is simply "the ultimate unexplained reality".[11] To this, the apologist depending on the cosmological argument is reduced to silence. Design arguments fail to convince for a number of reasons but fundamentally because they must assume some external measure by which the universe as a whole may be measured and the probability of its coming into existence by accident assessed: "there is no objective sense in which this is either more or less probable than any other possible universe."[12] An extension of the design argument appeals to the existence of human consciousness as evidence of a divine creator. Hick accepts that the religious person may feel this to be so but nonetheless "it is possible to find a naturalistic interpretation" that also accounts for all the known facts.[13]

Morality finds a secure foundation in religion but it does not provide conclusive evidence for the truth of a religious world view. While Christians may find that conscience suggests the divine origin of ethics the naturalist may be disposed to see that "morality is simply a remarkable human feature, continuous with though going far beyond analogous features of some of the other forms of animal life."[14] Religious experience may be compelling for those who have it but still explained in terms of illusion by the naturalist. It is perfectly sensible for the naturalist to claim that "the feeling of an unseen presence could all be hallucinatory in character."[15]

[11] Hick 1989a p.80
[12] Hick 1989a p.90
[13] Hick 1989a p.94
[14] Hick 1989a p.98
[15] Hick 1989a p.102

Hick also argues to the similar, though inverse, conclusions with reference to two major naturalistic challenges to theism. He outlines the arguments underlying the approaches of Freud and Durkheim to religion. Each depends upon the objection that religious phenomena can be satisfactorily explained without reference to a supernatural divinity. However, each is a case of reductionism that must depend "upon a prior naturalistic conviction".[16] Neither case is proven or provable but simply show how religious symbolism, desires and emotions may be satisfactorily explained in a non-religious way. Evil presents another challenge to theistic belief but, at the very least, Hick argues that some form of theodicy is able to show that while theism is certainly not proven by acts of wickedness in the world, it "can be shown not to be necessarily incompatible with them."[17]

The various arguments for and against naturalism and supernaturalism are not conclusive. Hick provides ample reason in each case to accept that religious or non-religious conclusions are already assumed as part of the premises in each argument. There is no neutral, arbitrating argument that can settle the fundamental dispute between a naturalist and supernaturalist interpretation of the universe. This leads Hick to reassert his argument:

> It seems, then, that the universe maintains its inscrutable ambiguity. In some aspects it invites whilst in others it repels a religious response. It permits both a religious and a naturalistic faith, but haunted in each case by a contrary possibility that can never be exorcised.[18]

[16] Hick 1989a p.114
[17] Hick 1989a p.121
[18] Hick 1989a p.124

The supposed ambiguity of the universe provides the basis for the re-launch of Hick's now simplified epistemology of religious knowledge. Faith is the act of interpretation by which human beings order the ambiguous data of the universe into a sense and meaning that reveal a supernatural divine reality behind it. In one sense, this act is a necessary act of interpretation because even the secularist must make sense of the ultimate ambiguity of the universe and, consequently, make certain, albeit negative, religious judgements.

The relationship between faith and the ambiguity of the universe gives rise to an important tension. Hick is relying upon a distinction between the logical or formal religious ambiguity of the universe and its concrete character in experience as unambiguous. Most people all of the time and some people for most of the time will interpret the universe in a particular way and, therefore, will not experience it as ambiguous. Only in the formal, logical sense might they admit the religious ambiguity of the universe. This is for two reasons. Firstly, this is because, as we have noted, Hick is certain that the universe does have a "definite character"[19] (an objective meaning) despite the various, sometimes incompatible, interpretations that humans make. Secondly, this is because one may only adopt one particular world view as a live option at any given time:

> For whilst the objective ambiguity of our environment consists in the fact that it is capable of being interpreted in a variety of ways, its consciously experienced and actively lived-in character consists in its actually being interpreted as meaningful in a particular way which, whilst it operates, excludes other possible ways.[20]

[19] Hick 1989a p.73
[20] Hick 1989a p.129

The tension that arises with this ambiguity thesis is that in order to adopt the pluralist hypothesis one must be simultaneously aware of the religious ambiguity of the universe and convinced that the universe is religiously unambiguous. For philosophical reasons one must accept ambiguity while for psychological reasons one cannot accept ambiguity. If this tension is unresolved then it indicates an interesting interpretation of Hick's theological position. This interpretation would be that Hick adopts a Christian position for all practical purposes and devotional life (the psychological conviction of religion) but suspends that commitment in favour of the pluralist account when considering the phenomenon of religion in strictly logical terms (the philosophical interpretation of religion). This is a basic distinction between theory and practice. However, Hick does not permit this tension to remain unresolved. The pluralist hypothesis is offered as an all-inclusive interpretation of particular religious patterns of belief and behaviour. It cannot be excluded from extending its revolutionary impulse to the devotional life of believers. Every religious believer must appropriate the implications of the ambiguity thesis for their own faith.[21] Hick's resolution is to claim that when one recognises the logical ambiguity of the universe then one must suspend the psychological certainty of commitment to a *particular* religious tradition. This suspension of commitment leads to what has been described as "transcendental agnosticism".[22]

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[21] "It is for the adherents of each of the great traditions to look critically at their own dogmas in the light of their new experience within a religiously plural world." (Hick 1985 p.50) For Christians, it is commitment to the uniqueness or superiority of Christ that must be suspended in the light of pluralism (cf. Forrester 1976 p72, Netland 1991 pp.240-249, Ogden 1988 pp.503-507).

[22] D'Costa 1991 and Mase 1994. Byrne identified earlier expressions of Hick's pluralist position as both sceptic and agnostic (Byrne 1982 p.292).

The Sceptic Tradition

Penelhum describes the methodology of Scepticism as the demonstration of the unsatisfactory nature of any positive argument for a dogmatic position.[23] Dogmatic certitude is not possible because of "the incapacity of human reason".[24] A central aim of Scepticism was to bring people to the realisation of these limitations in human reason. However, Scepticism did not intend to simply leave its victims in a state of doubt but to provide a practical way of life by which anyone could live happily with those doubts. Scepticism was offered as a practical philosophy. The position of suspended judgment was to lead to "Quietude".[25] According to Penelhum, the Sceptic is to yield in conformity to one's cultural norms "in an undogmatic, or uncommitted, or belief-less way".[26] There are habits of life that will lead one to live as if certain presuppositions or assumptions were certainly true but when articulating those views at a theoretical level or in philosophical discussion one must acknowledge that that certainty has no foundation.

Hick does not acknowledge any connection between his ambiguity thesis and the methodology of the Sceptics. However, it is interesting to draw the connections because they are almost identical. A description of the Sceptic methodology by Penelhum will bring this connection into focus:

> the Sceptic will assemble all those arguments that Dogmatists have used to show that it not only appears that *p*, but really is, and then will assemble all the arguments that contrary-minded Dogmatists have used to show that even if it

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[23] Penelhum 1983. "Dogmatist" being a technical term in Pyrrhonian Scepticism to identify philosophical schools claiming knowledge with certainty; i.e. Epicureanism and Stoicism. See Penelhum 1983 p.4.
[24] Penelhum 1983 p.4
[25] Penelhum 1983 p.6
[26] Penelhum 1983 p.6

> appears that *p*, it is not; this assemblage will bring upon him an incapacity to judge either that *p*, or that not-*p*. This will not make it cease to appear to him that *p* .... but it will enable him to live with his fellows who insist that *p* by conforming in his actions to their beliefs without affirming them.[27]

Hick and the Sceptics develop a system of methodological doubt in which no proposition may be held as entirely certain. This is because a fundamental distinction is made between reality as it really is and reality as it is understood by the limited human intellect. The resulting pattern of behaviour commended by both Hick and the Sceptics is that of suspending commitment on the truthfulness of any given world view but acting in day to day life as if one particular world view (for practical purposes probably the world view that dominates one's culture) were veridical. The practice of setting arguments for *p* and for not-*p* off against one another is a simple method for securing transcendence of commitment to *p* as an absolute truth. This is exactly the method adopted by Hick.

The discovery of the logical ambiguity of the universe does not leave the particular world view one continues to live with unchanged. On the contrary, the point of the Sceptic challenge is that this discovery would lead to cognitive peace: "what the Sceptic is helping us to do is to live in a world in which knowledge of [external realities] is not available."[28] However, the manner in which the Sceptic adopts customary traditions is different from the non-Sceptics adherence to those same practices. The traditions the Sceptic returns to in the wake of practising methodological doubt are "disinfected" of "those specious underpinnings of belief and valuation that have given it meaning."[29]

[27] Penelhum 1983 p.9
[28] Penelhum 1983 p.8
[29] Penelhum 1983 p.10

The Sceptic came to realise that unravelling the ambiguity of the universe was neither possible nor necessary for a content life. His or her way of life:

> was one in which quietude could come from recognising that the world which he and others like him inhabited was one in which we could live satisfactorily by assenting to appearances but not disputing about the realities which lay behind them.[30]

Hick also makes this claim regarding our religious commitments and the ultimate religious ambiguity of the universe. Religious commitments may still be professed after the Copernican revolution but their significance is seriously relativised. For a pluralist, creedal confessions are second-order statements based as they are on an underlying profession of the fundamental ambiguity of the universe. Hick is entitled to continue to profess the truth of Christianity but only because in line with his epistemology he has extensively revised the nature of this commitment and relativised the certainty of those truths.

Faith Without Assurance

The assumption that the universe is religiously ambiguous causes a change in the manner that religious beliefs are held. Even though, according to Hick's model, ambiguity remains only a formal or logical assumption, nonetheless, at the level of practice and confession it must cause one to approach debate and dispute without the conviction that one has true answers but with a humble ignorance continually searching for the truth that lies beyond.[31] In order to sustain his ambiguity thesis Hick

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[30] Penelhum 1983 p.11

[31] The suspension of religious convictions that this ambiguity entails is also demanded by Markham's "open" account of religious dialogue in Markham 1994: "*We now accept that absolute certainty about the nature of the world is clearly unobtainable.*" p.176. It is the assumption also of Ward's convergent pluralism in Ward 1991 pp.175-

must engage in apologetics but his apologetics are essentially an anti-apologetics. He is concerned with denying that our theological positions are built on certain axiomatic truths that must then be debated, defended and extended to those with alternative belief systems. Epistemological considerations lead Hick to argue that there are no axiomatic truths available to us because the universe is itself religiously ambiguous. For this reason one must accept the truth of the Sceptic tradition at least with regard to religious commitment. Belief is a second order act of opinion informing day to day devotion and lifestyle which is held alongside a first order admission that the universe is religiously silent, open to a range of equally plausible interpretations.

Ambiguity and Coercion

Penelhum has questioned Hick's proposal that for belief to be meaningfully free it must occur without coercion. He rejects the argument that an ambiguous universe is a necessary condition for human freedom. Hick is mistaken because he confuses "having the truth made clear to one with being shattered into submission."[32] Having the truth made clear to one (through reason, revelation or miracle) causes "removal of grounds for reasonable doubt"[33] but not the restriction of freedom. Penelhum points out that any human subject "could refuse to accept them".[34] The fact that such behaviour is irrational is neither here nor there as free beings are free to be irrational if they choose to be so.[35] One may choose to act irrationally and, in so doing, be exercising cognitive freedom.[36]

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[32] Penelhum 1993 p.172 cf. Penelhum 1983 pp.111-112.

[33] Penelhum 1993 p.172

[34] Penelhum 1993 p.172

[35] Hick hints at this possibility in Badham 1990 pp.55-60 where he points out that a successful proof would not necessarily lead anyone to worship.

[36] This point will be explored further with reference to the relativity of rationality in Chapter 5. While I believe Penelhum's point to be sound I would want to suggest that

Coercion and the Faith of Christ

Hick's description of the faith of Christ is a good example of 'coerced' faith. Throughout the dramatic revisions in his Christology a clear pattern emerges in his descriptions of the faith of Christ. In his early work we read:

> For in whatever manner Jesus first impressed his disciples - whether as a wonder-worker, as a teacher, or as a magnetic and numinous personality - the outstanding fact about him, which soon gripped them, was his sheer moral goodness and purity, his total lack of concern for himself and the absolute dedication of his life to his heavenly Father's purposes.[37]

In this early description of Christ, Hick is keen to stress (through the use of "sheer", "total" and "absolute") the quality of faith and conviction that motivated Jesus. This was a man consumed with the sense of God's will and purpose. There is no hint that Jesus had come to make a reasonable choice in the face of an ambiguous situation. This characterisation of Jesus is made with increasing clarity and force in Hick's later work. He describes Jesus as "intensely and overwhelmingly conscious of the reality of God" and "his life a continuous response to the divine love as both utterly gracious and utterly demanding."[38] Hick does not describe Jesus exercising cognitive freedom in his response to God. On the contrary, he was 'overwhelmingly conscious' of the truth of theism and found God's love 'utterly demanding'.

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the use of the terms "rational" and "irrational" beg too many questions. It would be more accurate to say that a human agent may choose to reject one system of rationality and adopt an alternative rational system in order to avoid having to adopt a belief they do not wish to. In doing so it is a simple truism that their resulting belief will be classed as irrational or non-rational by those retaining the former rationality.

[37] Hick 1988b p.223

[38] Hick 1977b p.172

For Hick's *Agapé*-Christology[39] to work he must make an identification between the will of Christ and the will of God. He is aware that this identification suggests a cause and effect relationship between God and Christ and, he remarks, this may echo the paradox of the compatibility of divine sovereignty and human freedom:

> "But this must not lead us to a picture of God (in heaven) causing Jesus (on earth) to act in this way or that, like a puppet-master pulling strings or a general directing his troops by field radio."[40]

In contrast, Hick argues that the relationship between God and Christ in purpose is "analogous to that in which the radiating energy of the sun 'causes' the falling of its rays upon the earth's surface."[41] In other words, Hick wishes to describe the relationship in more organic, continuous metaphors than puppets or soldiers would suggest. However, this does nothing to lessen the implications for the free will of Jesus. It does permit Hick to open the logical possibility of many "saviours" (or, more technically, people whose wills matched the will of God) but not to weaken the overwhelming nature of God's revelation to these people. Consequently, Hick continues to describe the experience of Jesus in unequivocal terms:

> But Jesus was so fully God's agent, so completely conscious of living in God's presence and serving God's love, that the divine reality was mediated through him to others.[42]

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[39] The Christology Hick espoused in 1977. This suggestion arises in the period at the end of his conservative phase immediately prior to Copernican revolution. It is interesting to note that even here, the Christology is preparing the ground for the shift to the radical position.
[40] Hick 1988b pp.162-163
[41] Hick 1988b p.163
[42] Hick 1988b p.177

That Jesus is so 'fully' and 'completely' aware of the truth of theism continues to raise the problem of how far he shared in the logical predicament of ambiguity with all that this entails for certainty in religious belief. Interestingly, one of the strongest statements of the absolute sense in which Hick claims that Jesus was aware of the truth of theism is found in his most recent writings:

> From the point of view of the psychology of religion we can say that only an extremely intense God-consciousness could have sustained Jesus' firm prophetic assurance and charismatic power. The heavenly Father was utterly real to him - as real as the men and women with whom he interacted every day or the Galilean hills among which they lived.[43]

To Jesus the reality of God was no different from the reality of the physical world around him. So real was Jesus' consciousness of God that even his disciples were able to appropriate his consciousness for themselves. This description raises acute problems when related to Hick's account of faith and ambiguity. We have noted that the three step epistemology is present throughout Hick's work. A primary distinction between the first step, the natural, and the third step, the religious, is that at the first step only narrow parameters for interpretation are possible while at the third step, as a result of the ambiguity thesis, enormous variation is possible. In Faith and Knowledge Hick draws a moral conclusion from this distinction; "If God were to reveal himself to us in the coercive way in which the physical world is disclosed to us, he would thereby annihilate us as free and responsible persons."[44] However, in the case of Jesus Christ, his experience of God was on a level with his experience of the Galilean hills. Christ's experience of God was within the first step (the natural) of interpretation. The reason why his experience was so vivid lay in God's overwhelming revelation of himself and

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[43] Hick 1993a p.18 cf. Hick 1989a p.216
[44] Hick 1988b p.134

this revelation of love being so utterly demanding. Hick describes the faith of Jesus (along with that of Paul, Old Testament saints and those of Christian history) as "involuntary".[45]

Conclusion

Hick commends Jesus to us as a model of religious faith as well as the source of Christian faith and, yet, Jesus is an example of someone whose faith was compelled. According to Hick's anthropology Jesus is fully human and to be fully human one must be a free agent capable of an uncoerced response to the religious ambiguity of the universe. Jesus, even were he the only figure in history to have done so, would be the exception that proves the rule: *there is no incoherence in a free moral agent adopting a religious belief even though under compulsion to believe.* It is true that 'compulsion' in this sense does not imply being violently forced to believe that something is the case but this is of no consequence. Penelhum is correct in declaring that Hick confuses being shattered into submission with having the truth shown to one. Hick's use of the word 'compulsion' is exactly a confusion of these senses. If one agrees that no such incompatibility between compulsion and freedom exist then as a consequence, adoption of theism rather than atheism may be understood in terms of obedience and disobedience (moral categories) rather than in terms of rationality and irrationality (intellectual categories). This being the case we have grounds to question the viability of Hick's ambiguity thesis. We must now assess how, given an ambiguous universe, Hick seeks to ground the rationality of faith.

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[45] Badham 1990 p.59

(c) An Apologetic for Religion

According to Hick's early work the rationality of theistic belief is justified on the grounds of vivid religious experience. This does not necessarily mean that anyone at all is justified in holding theistic belief to be true:

> the proper question is whether the religious man's awareness of being in the unseen presence of God constitutes a sufficient reason for the religious man himself to be sure of the reality of God.[1]

Hick argues that religious experience provides the grounds for those who have it to be rationally justified in believing whatever their experience compels them to believe. In this sense, the connection between belief and experience is the same at the third step, religious belief, as it is at the first step, natural belief. We trust that our experience is substantially veridical. It is important to note that this is a person-relative application of rationality. The atheist and the theist may both be rationally justified in believing what they believe on the basis of their different personal experiences. In terms of Hick's realist framework, only one, at most, can be correct in their belief but both can be rational.

In his contribution to Arguments For the Existence of God Hick developed his understanding of rational religious belief further. After providing three theological reasons why many Christians have rejected theistic proofs as inappropriate,[2] Hick moves on to establish the rational structure of belief without proof. He observes that religious belief does not normally arise from speculative logical arguments or proofs: "The claims of religion are claims made by individuals and communities on the basis

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[1] Hick 1988a p.210
[2] Badham 1990 pp.50-55

of their experience".[3] The starting point for religious belief does not lie in metaphysical speculation but in experience. Therefore, the test for rational belief cannot start with the logical process by which those beliefs are arrived at but must start with the pre-theoretical experience that causes those beliefs to arise. The question of rationality is then settled with reference to "the rationality of a particular person's believing, given the data that he is using"[4] rather than by comparison with some universal standards of truth.

Hick's Parity Argument

Hick uses a version of the parity argument[5] in order to maintain that religious belief is rational even given the fact that there are many people who have had no significant religious experience. His sceptic account of knowledge undermines the assumption that sense experience can be trusted with complete certainty. On the contrary, Scepticism claimed that "its veridical character cannot be logically demonstrated".[6] The assumption that sense experience can be trusted as a true disclosure of an objective world can find no theoretical guarantee. Hick maintains that this follows the:

> success of Hume's attempt to show that our normal non-solipsist belief in an objective world of enduring objects around us in space is neither a product of, nor justifiable by, philosophical reasoning but is what has been called .... a natural belief.[7]

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[3] Badham 1990 p.55
[4] Badham 1990 p.56
[5] An argument relying upon analogy.
[6] Badham 1990 p.57
[7] Badham 1990 p.57 In ascribing this concept to Hume, Hick is following the ground breaking work of Norman Kemp Smith 1941. Hume offers certain sceptic arguments only to transcend them with his own notion of natural belief. Küng 1991 pp.453-477 also develops a form of the parity argument in his treatment of "fundamental trust".

A 'natural belief' is part of a class of beliefs that have no theoretical justification but are essential and natural to human existence. One simply cannot live without assuming an objective universe despite the absence of theoretical proof. Therefore, one must relax, in the manner of Quietude, into adopting a naturalist position where unproven beliefs are held as true beliefs.

> It is thus a basic truth in, or a presupposition of, our language that it is rational or sane to believe in the reality of the external world that we inhabit in common with other people, and irrational or insane not to do so.[8]

There are two features of sense experience that induce trust in its veridical nature. The first is the "involuntary character"[9] of such experience. The experience is so compelling that one feels unable, psychologically, to believe otherwise. The second feature is the obvious practical advantage one finds in living on the assumption that the experience is veridical. It enables one to "act successfully in terms of our belief in an external world".[10] Taken together, these two features provide adequate reasons for one living upon the assumption that belief in an objective reality is a true belief. Such true belief counts as justified belief. Hick then applies the same structure of argument to belief in the religious significance of the universe.

Religious experience is, at least for theists, the "sense of the presence of God".[11] This experience is, for many, of such a compelling quality that it would seem reasonable for those individuals to assume the veridical nature of their experience. It would seem

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[8] Badham 1990 p.58
[9] Badham 1990 p.58
[10] Badham 1990 p.58
[11] Badham 1990 p.58

insane to those who have such experience to do otherwise: "he is no more inclined to doubt its veridical character than to doubt the evidence of his senses".[12] Hick describes an analogous relationship between the reasonableness of natural belief in empirical matters and the reasonableness of belief in religious matters. If one is justified then so, by parity, is the other.

Hick's Account of Credulity

In An Interpretation of Religion Hick expands his account of rationality and belief with reference to the principle of credulity.[13] This principle suggests that, given no obvious countervailing considerations, one should trust that how one perceives things to be is how things really are. Countervailing considerations might include the amount of alcohol one has consumed or the brevity of an experience.[14] If such countervailing considerations are not present then, according to the principle of credulity, to not trust our basic perceptions of the world as an external reality is to "border upon insanity".[15]

Hick describes as "the great souls or mahatmas"[16] those whose experience of God was "as real" as their experience of other people and, in the case of Jesus, of "the hills and rivers and lake of Galilee".[17] The principle of credulity, which we share with these great souls, informs us that we can only live: "on the basis of our experience and on the assumption that it is generally cognitive .... of reality transcending our own

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[12] Badham 1990 p.59
[13] A term developed in Swinburne 1979.
[14] Hick 1989a p.215
[15] Hick 1989a p.215
[16] Hick 1989a p.215
[17] Hick 1989a p.216

consciousness."[18] Therefore, the great soul must trust in the veridical nature of their experience of God as a living presence.

However, Hick assumes that none of his readership have the intensity of experience that marks the great souls. The rationality of belief in the case of exceptional experience provides only a weak foundation for rationality in the case of normal experience. Hick asks "whether it is rational for us to adopt beliefs on the ground that someone else, in another culture, reasonably held them."[19] The first principle Hick introduces to address this question is that those adopted beliefs must be compatible with the wider range of beliefs we already acknowledge to be true. For example, Hick argues that we cannot adopt the beliefs of Jesus concerning cosmology or medicine because these fail "to cohere with .... our contemporary scientific beliefs."[20] To trust in the experience of someone else as veridical requires that one adopt certain related beliefs as at least logically possible but does not require that one adopt all of their beliefs. Hick claims that this is the proper place for natural theology which does not "prove the existence of God, or even show it to be probable".[21] Instead it provides grounds for the possibility of the belief being true. Confirmation of this possibility is provided by religious experience.

Regarding those who do not have such compelling religious experiences, Hick concludes that they "cannot have the same justification for belief as those who do".[22] Hick discusses the justification of belief in the case of two alternative types of

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[18] Hick 1989a p.216
[19] Hick 1989a p.219
[20] Hick 1989a p.219
[21] Hick 1989a p.219
[22] Hick 1989a p.221

religious people not benefiting from the experience open to the great souls. Firstly, concerning those devoid of personal experience:

> They might possibly .... be so impressed by the moral and spiritual fruits of faith in the lives of the saints as to be drawn to share, at least tentatively, the latter's beliefs - in which case it would .... be proper to count their being impressed in this way as itself a secondary kind of religious experience.[23]

The second type of person, more normal according to Hick, are those who do have a less intensive version, a "remote echo",[24] of the same kind of experience described by the great souls. These are the 'peak' experiences of the divine presence during moments of heightened awareness. Because such experiences are more sporadic and less compelling than those of the great souls; "One's belief is not so deeply or solidly grounded as theirs."[25] Nonetheless, it does provide reason for such people to adopt the beliefs they do.

Hick establishes the rationality of religious belief on the cognitive experience of religious meaning in the universe. Such experience is a ground for the third step in epistemic development. Hick describes three forms or levels of religious experience. The most basic level is the experience of being impressed by the claimed experience of someone else. This experience provides the least grounds for faith and, as a consequence, is "always vulnerable to the kind of sceptical challenge" found in the modern world.[26] The second level is that of momentary peak experiences giving cause to trust in the validity of the experience claimed by others. In this case, personal experience bolsters the confidence one has in the more profound experience seen in

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[23] Hick 1989a p.221
[24] Hick 1989a p.222
[25] Hick 1989a p.223
[26] Hick 1989a p.222

another. The third level, the highest, is that of the great soul, saint or mahatma whose religious experience is continuous with their experience of the natural world. While each level varies in the extent to which it provides grounds for the reasonableness of belief, it remains the case that each does provide minimal grounds for belief. Hick rests his case for the rationality of belief in the personal religious experience of the believer. Whatever the intensity, faith is justified by experience.

Hick places great weight on personal religious experience in his defence of the reasonableness of religious belief. He has done so throughout his epistemology and so it is a continuous thread running through both his early philosophy and his later development of the pluralist hypothesis. It is capable of this consistent position in his work because of two relevant features. Firstly, Hick's description of religious experience is individualistic. It is not traditions as a whole that are the subjects of justification but the personal or even private religious feelings of individuals. Therefore, if a *prima facie* similarity of experience can be established among individuals throughout the world religions then Hick is able to marginalise the significance of the traditions to which they belong. Secondly, Hick's account of religious experience has minimal content. It is largely an account of a quality of experience rather than an account of the content of experience. His use of such expressions as the 'divine presence' or 'limitless goodness' to identify the content of religious experience are deliberately vague. This permits Hick to extend his epistemology from the Christian tradition to incorporate any significant religious tradition.

Conclusion

Hick's epistemology is built upon these two major features of belief. The individualism of religious belief separates specific cases of faith from the broad traditions of enquiry in which they are found.[27] The minimalist content of religious experience demands a distinction between the direct beliefs the religious person is entitled to hold on the basis of their experience and the indirect beliefs they formulate in theology. Theology is, for Hick, a second-order discourse. A major critique of these features will be made when we turn to a range of responses to enlightenment thought.[28] However, we will now analyse the very core of Hick's contemporary epistemology. We will see that it is Hick's commitment to a Kantian account of religious knowledge that compels him to adopt the sceptical assumptions of his ambiguity thesis.

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[27] This is an extension of the key argument in Smith's distinction between religion as the cumulative tradition and religion as a personal act of faith (Smith 1963). Hick acknowledges a significant debt to Smith in his pluralist hypothesis (Hick 1989a p.160).

[28] Particularly in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4 The Kantian Inheritance

(a) Two Worlds of Truth

Kant's philosophy has always exercised a degree of influence on Hick's thought though this influence has become more prominent in his most recent work. In this section we will trace his use of Kant and analyse the implications of drawing upon Kant's epistemology. In section (a) we shall examine Hick's conscious appropriation of Kant. In sections (b) and (c) we uncover more general themes in Kant's work that are echoed in Hick. In section (d) we will be in a position to establish the great continuity that lies between the work of these two thinkers. This continuity is much greater than Hick would himself acknowledge. It is this continuity that provides the basis for the claim that Hick is committed to an essential scepticism with regard to religious knowledge. This in turn undermines the possibility of a faith constituted approach to enquiry and apologetics.

Faith based on Morality

In his earlier work, Hick criticised Kant's description of God and immortality for being no more than postulates of reason. These religious postulates are assumptions made in the course of practical considerations. Hick distances himself from the theoretical nature of Kant's categorisations:

> For the purpose of our inquiry, the main comment to be made upon this Kantian theory is that it leaves no room for any acquaintance with or experience of the divine, such as religious persons claim.[1]

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[1] Hick 1988a p.62

As already noted, Hick's theistic world view finds justification in the religious experience of individual believers. God, therefore, is not for Hick a postulate of reason or morality but a felt presence. Nonetheless, Hick writes elsewhere that Kant's position on this does have "limited validity" because:

> To recognise moral claims as taking precedence over all other interests is, implicitly, to believe in a reality of some kind, other than the natural world, that is superior to oneself and entitled to one's obedience.[2]

Consequently, there is an important connection between the work of Hick and Kant regarding the possibility of indirect justification. Moral belief is the second step of interpretation in Hick's schematic epistemology. Moral interpretation, as with religious interpretation, is grounded upon experience of a certain sort and it is this experience that provides the indirect justification for moral beliefs. Hick adds religious experience as a further component missing in Kant's epistemology but he argues that such an addition remains consistent with Kant's thought. However, even at this early stage of his work he identifies a development in Kant's position with which he is much more sympathetic:

> in the later very fragmentary Opus Postumum Kant moved toward a rather different view according to which the experience of the moral law, instead of being treated as the basis for a theistic postulation, is thought of as in some manner mediating the divine presence and will.[3]

Such a shift in Kant's thought would be much more attractive to Hick. Furthermore, such a shift does not require a radical change in epistemology. The important term in use here is the description of experience as "mediating" something beyond experience. Mediation allows for a more direct connection between human subject and divine

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[2] Hick 1990a p.29
[3] Hick 1988a p.63

reality through experience than the noumenon/phenomenon distinction would suggest. However, in the course of our discussion we will see that Hick's notion of mediation, shaped by Kant's epistemology, is an empty term.

The General Category of the Ethical

Despite Hick's disavowal of Kant's notion of the religious postulate, he does affirm Kant's general treatment of ethics particularly with reference to the categorical imperative. He describes it as one of the philosophical "high points" where Christ's golden rule has found expression.[4] According to Hick, Kant's description of the universal validity of ethics based on the categorical imperative is open to being understood in entirely Buddhist terms. Kant's man of duty is equivalent to an *arhat* making his ethics "a useful stepping-stone to the more positive and mysterious things that are said about nirvana in the pali canon."[5] In this way Hick categorises Kant's work on ethics as a theoretical exposition of a core moral belief found in both Christianity and Buddhism. Such a treatment of ethics provides the basis for substantiating the pluralist hypothesis because it removes the need to define moral claims in terms specific to any tradition.

The Kantian Structure of Pluralism

The most sustained use Hick makes of Kant is with regard to the epistemic framework of the pluralist hypothesis. While Hick's three step epistemology is compatible with the notion of different interpretations of the same religious object it does not explain *why* such different interpretations should occur. This is particularly significant as there are not such very different interpretations in the case of natural or moral knowledge. Hick's argument in favour of cognitive freedom of religious interpretation

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[4] Hick 1976a p.426
[5] Hick 1976a p.435

primarily concerns the freedom to adopt or not adopt a religious, as opposed to a naturalistic, interpretation of the universe. In itself, it does not account for why there should be such varied religious interpretations of the universe. Hick draws directly from Kant's epistemology in order to account for pluralism. We will now review this more sustained use of Kant and then briefly compare Kant's own claims with those of Hick in order to draw out the distinctiveness of Hick's position.

The basic thesis of religious pluralism as defined by Hick relies upon the crucial distinction between "the Real *an sich* and the Real as variously experienced-and-thought by different human communities".[6] Human communities do not perceive the Real as it is. Their perception is always conditioned by the cultural context in which it occurs. Therefore, the Real as perceived is not the same as the Real that is not perceived. In order to provide a theoretical framework for this claim Hick draws upon "one of Kant's most basic epistemological insights" which he expresses in general terms as:

> the mind actively interprets sensory information in terms of concepts, so that the environment as we consciously perceive and inhabit it is our familiar three-dimensional world of objects interacting in space.[7]

The familiar environment we inhabit is not the real world in itself. Hick identifies the active component of human knowledge. According to him the mind does not passively receive the sensory information from which it constructs a view of the world.[8] Nor is the environment simply the construction of the mind. Hick affirms

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[6] Hick 1989a p.236
[7] Hick 1989a p.240
[8] The assumption of the classical empiricist thinkers. See especially Locke 1976 [1690] who, famously, described the mind as "white paper void of all characters" (p.33) until furnished with ideas from experience.

both sensory information (objectivity) and the active role of the mind in interpretation (subjectivity). The characteristics of dimensional experience - time, space, substance, causality and so on - are all categories of the mind through which the otherwise chaotic sensory information is ordered. Hick is well aware that this is but one, simple, aspect of Kant's thought and that the broader range of his work is subject to intense debate.[9] Therefore, he distinguishes his own use of Kant from Kantian studies, noting that his own application is not one of which Kant would have approved. He also suggests that the basic thrust of Kant's principle is to be found in Thomas Aquinas and the Muslim theologian Al Junaid.[10] However, Hick is not simply using Kant's work as an illustration of his own arguments and conclusions in the way that he uses the Bible.[11] There is a distinctively Kantian insight he is drawing upon. This is Kant's explicit distinction "between an entity as it is in itself and as it appears in perception".[12] This distinction is characterised as *noumenon* and *phenomenon* where the latter indicates reality as ordered by our interpretative capacities and the former indicates that world as it is in itself. Hick states the consequent division: "the noumenal world exists independently of our perception of it and the phenomenal world is that same world as it appears to our human consciousness."[13]

Knowledge distinguished from Reality

The basic insight Hick wishes to press into service must be modified in order to suit his purposes. He is not concerned to develop this distinction with regard to natural belief. As we have noted, the first two steps in his epistemology, nature and morality, permit little freedom of interpretation and, as a result, command much continuity of

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[9] Hick 1989a p.240
[10] Hick 1989a p.241
[11] cf. Chapter 3 (a) n.16
[12] Hick 1989a p.241
[13] Hick 1989a p.241

thought between people belonging to different cultures and periods in history. However, the third step permits great epistemic freedom and it is this step, the religious interpretation and its resulting pluralism, that is to be understood in terms of the Kantian distinction. Therefore, the analogous use Hick is making of Kant's thought is the claim that the Real as it is in-itself must be distinguished from the Real as it is perceived by us. In this discussion, Hick remarks that he is departing from Kant's own thought:

> But for Kant God is postulated, not experienced. In partial agreement but also partial disagreement with him, I want to say that the Real *an sich* is postulated by us as a pre-supposition, not of the moral life, but of religious experience and the religious life, whilst the gods, as also the mystically known Brahman, Sunyata and so on, are phenomenal manifestations of the Real occurring within the realm of religious experience.[14]

Hick affirms the existence of the Real in the same way that Kant affirms the existence of the noumenon: it is the ground of phenomenon. However, its existence cannot be known directly, for all knowledge is interpreted and, therefore, knowledge of phenomenon. This implies that the existence of the Real must, after all, be a postulate. Hick only differs from Kant on this point in asserting that the ground of the postulate is experience rather than morality or pure reason. Nonetheless, the earlier suggestion by Hick that his position differed from Kant because of the possibility of mediated experience of the Real no longer holds.[15] The divine presence is not mediated by experience because the only possible objects of experience are the phenomenon: "When we speak of a moral God .... we are speaking of the Real as humanly experienced: that is, as phenomenon."[16] The persona of the Real not the Real itself is

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[14] Hick 1989a p.243
[15] cf. Hick 1988a p.63
[16] Hick 1989a p.246

the object of experience. Therefore, the Real (the in-itself) is not experienced but postulated as the necessary ground of religious experience. Despite Hick's earlier protestations to the contrary it is clear that the noumenal Real is a postulate for his work in the same way as it had been for Kant. The only remaining difference being that Kant understands this to be a postulate of morality and pure reason whereas Hick maintains that it is a postulate of religious experience. However, even this difference is superficial. In our analysis of Hick's epistemology we have understood Hick's treatment of religious experience to be essentially moralistic: religious experience includes, while transcending, the experience of moral necessity and compulsion in one's life. Thus, in a very real sense Hick adds nothing to Kant's two-fold theory of reality and the role of postulate as the only bridge between the two.

The differences Hick describes between his own epistemic position and that of Kant are not matters of substance. An absolute divide is maintained between the Real *an sich* and the Real as experienced. The dichotomy is offered as a means of both explaining the existence of a plurality of religious interpretations and of demanding tolerance on the part of those who hold to one of those many interpretations. This conclusion is seriously problematic as we shall see in a moment but first we may consider Kant's own treatment of the phenomenon/noumenon relationship.

The Significance of Hume

Kant had been greatly occupied with the thought of Hume. Prior to his encounter with Hume's thought he had been party to the mainstream of German Idealist philosophy but, in Kant's famous words, Hume "interrupted my dogmatic slumber".[17] Hume's treatment of causality had brought to the surface a fundamental problem in

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[17] Kant 1989 (1783) p.7

epistemology. An example of what we might call causality is the relationship between a flame and its heat upon us. Hume describes the epistemic interpretation of this relationship:

> Thus we remember to have seen that species of object we call *flame*, and to have felt that species of sensation we call *heat*. We likewise call to mind their constant conjunction in all past instances. Without any further ceremony, we call the one *cause*, and the other *effect*, and infer the existence of the one from the other.[18]

The problem with the absence of 'ceremony' is that it also represents an absence of reason. There is no thing, 'causation', that we have identified in this process. All that has been identified is the constant conjunction of events and the natural habit of relating them to one another through the concepts of cause and effect. Hume applied this treatment to many areas of thought and thus exhibited the poverty of the empiricist position: many of our most treasured beliefs are not based upon sensory evidence or experience but rather on simple habits of the mind. Exactly what Hume wanted to make of these startling conclusions is the subject of much debate.[19] Kant did not accept what he understood to be Hume's sceptical conclusions but undertook the constructive task of demonstrating how an epistemology may proceed on the basis of the *a priori* nature of many beliefs such as causation and subsistence. Kant

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[18] Hume 1987 (1739) p.134

[19] The traditional view of Hume describes him as a sceptic. Russell accuses him of this suggesting that his work represented the "bankruptcy of eighteenth-century reasonableness" (Russell 1984 p.645). Hume himself certainly prompts such suspicions with his admission that "As the sceptical doubt arises naturally from a profound and intense reflection on those subjects, it always increases the further we carry our reflection .... carelessness and inattention alone can afford us any remedy." (Hume 1987 p.269). However, Norman Kemp Smith broke the long tradition of interpreting Hume as a sceptic and, instead emphasised the place of natural instinctual belief as the grounds of knowledge (Kemp Smith 1941). For our purposes we shall not refer to this discussion but simply adopt Kant's treatment of Hume as a sceptic.

understood Hume to have set a problem rather than found a solution and to the task of finding that solution Kant set himself. He contrasts his work with that of Hume who:

> ran his ship ashore, for safety's sake, landing on scepticism, there to let it lie and rot; whereas my object is rather to give it a pilot, who, by means of safe astronomical principles .... may steer the ship safely .... [20]

In his response to Hume's scepticism, Kant maintained that the mind was formed by *a priori* intuitions: "At the basis of empirical intuition lies a pure intuition (of space and time) which is *a priori*."[21] Kant argued that space and time were intuitions of the human mind already present in the encounter with reality. All reality is ordered by the mind in terms of spatial position and temporal sequence. Knowledge is impossible without the *a priori* contribution of these intuitions. Furthermore, Kant drew up a table of the concepts of the human mind that also order all knowledge.[22] The resulting "physical system" is one that "precedes all empirical cognition of nature"[23] and provides the framework in which all experience will occur. Kant's solution to what he supposed was Hume's dilemma is to affirm the subjective contribution of the human mind in the construction of human knowledge while also establishing empirical realism on the presupposition that such construction only occurs in response to the sensations of an external world. Besides the empirical, Kant established that:

> particular concepts must yet be superadded - concepts which have their origin quite *a priori* in the pure understanding, and under which every perception must first of all be subsumed and then their means changed into experience.[24]

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[20] Kant 1989 p.9
[21] Kant 1989 p.36
[22] Kant 1989 p.61
[23] Kant 1989 p.64
[24] Kant 1989 pp.54-55

Thus far, we may identify Hick's use of Kant's categories and intuitions, as analogous to the role of religion and doctrine where human thought forms shape religious experience into its culturally peculiar forms. The connection Hick draws with Kant's work is sometimes analogous but other times direct. To treat the Christian world view as a correlate to Kant's *a priori* would clearly be an example of using Kant's work analogously. In contrast to Kant, the Christian world view, as an *a priori*, may be adopted for a variety of reasons and held with a variety of degrees of strength and conviction. Kant's *a priori* do not have these features because they are prior to all experience whatsoever. Hick uses the *a priori* as analogous to the role of religious experience within the religious world view.

The Postulates of Religious Faith

However, there is a direct connection that Hick makes between religious belief and Kant's epistemology. This is the role of the basic belief that the universe is filled with a divine presence and will. Such a basic belief is not specifically Christian but, rather, an example of the basic religious interpretation of the universe. This is a genuine example of an *a priori* category of the understanding existing for those who have it, as it were, prior to all reflection. There are then two uses Hick makes of Kant's *a priori*, one of which is analogous and one is direct. These two uses relate to the distinction in Hick's work between religious faith and Christian faith.[25] Christian faith is only analogous to Kant's *a priori* whereas religious faith is a direct example of Kant's *a priori*.

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[25] Chapter 3 (a).

Kant denies that the categories of the understanding apply to reality in itself. Because they have an active role in the construction of reality they cannot reach beyond the reality they help shape:

> A transcendental use is made of a concept in a principle, when it is referred to things *in-themselves*; an empirical use, when it is referred merely to appearances, that is to objects of a possible *experience*.[26]

Though affirming the latter use of categories, Kant denies the possibility of their transcendental use. Transcendental use of the categories is impossible because the categories only ever exist in a composite form; made up of both "the logical form of the concept" and "an object to which it may apply".[27] The empirical element of sense experience is essential to the operation of the *a priori* without which they "are mere play of imagination".[28] Thus, the categories are only applicable to the phenomenal world of appearances. The noumena are not sensible and, therefore, not an appropriate object for the intuitions of space and time or the categories of the understanding. Consequently, the noumenon is no more than a postulate and lies beyond discursive understanding:

> Where this unity of time is not to be met with, as is the case with noumena, the whole use, indeed the whole meaning of the categories is entirely lost, for even the possibility of things to correspond to the categories is in this case incomprehensible.[29]

Thus we see a sharp divide between the phenomenal world ordered and comprehended by the active participation of the mind and the noumenal world which is beyond

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[26] Kant 1993 (1781) p.206
[27] Kant 1993 p.207
[28] Kant 1993 p.207
[29] Kant 1993 p.212

comprehension. Our knowledge of the noumena is only a negative knowledge. Kant considers the claim that there might be some form of sixth sense, a kind of sense of the noumena, which would yield at least knowledge of the noumena by acquaintance. He describes this the "*positive* sense" of noumena in which noumena become "an *object of a non-sensible intuition.*"[30] Yet Kant's argument is that this suggestion is impossible. All objects arise with sense experience and, therefore, only the negative meaning of noumena, that which is not known, is appropriate. The noumenal world cannot rise above the status of a postulate.

However, the important function of the noumena in Kant's thought is found in his denial that the sensible world could be all that there is. It is true that we cannot extend our intuition beyond phenomena, nor can we "maintain that sensibility is the only possible mode of intuition".[31] All our categories of understanding are limited to the phenomenal realm such that:

> we do not possess an intuition, not even the concept of a possible intuition, by means of which objects beyond the region of sensibility could be given us, and in reference to which the understanding might be employed *assertorically.*[32]

Therefore, the noumenon is a limiting concept providing the basis for Kant's refutation of the Idealist claim that reality is nothing but ideas within the realm of thought and the claim of traditional Christian metaphysics that it is possible to employ the understanding 'assertorically' to analyse non- or super- sensory reality. The resulting epistemic treatment of the noumena could be described as agnostic:

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[30] Kant 1993 p.211
[31] Kant 1993 p.213
[32] Kant 1993 p.213

> But [the noumenon] at the same time prescribes limits by itself, for it confesses itself unable to know these by means of categories, and hence is compelled to think them merely as an unknown something.[33]

The description of Kant's position as agnostic concerning the noumenon may be qualified in two ways by this quotation. Firstly, in terms of Kant's philosophy the noumenon is not God but all reality considered in itself rather than as appearance. Secondly, though the noumenon may not be the subject of positive descriptions (it exists, is big, is yellow and so on) nonetheless, as a necessary postulate, certain negative descriptions may not be applied to it (it does not exist, for example). Having denied the transcendental use of the categories (which would have permitted positive descriptions of the noumena) Kant affirms the transcendental significance of the categories[34] because they do assume that there is a reality in itself even though inaccessible to us.

Conclusions

Kant's epistemology may be characterised as being founded upon two worlds of truth. One is accessible and dependent upon the active participation of the human mind whereas the other is a regulative, limiting concept. It is a necessary postulate of empirical realism but not a subject for assertive propositions. Hick's pluralist thesis has much to gain from this two worlds notion of truth. If successful, this analysis permits him to affirm a shared noumenon as the postulate of the plural phenomena worshipped, adored or revered by the adherents of various religious traditions. The analysis has great explanatory power. However, there are two related areas of difficulty for this application. The first area of difficulty concerns the legitimacy of

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[33] Kant 1993 p.214
[34] Kant 1993 p.210

Hick's reading of Kant.[35] The second area of difficulty arises with the implications of adopting a two worlds theory of truth. In the following part of this section we shall analyse this latter set of problems by exploring the Kantian epistemology a little further.

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[35] A significant critique of the kind of use made of Kant by Hick is to be found in Godlove 1989. Godlove argues that a plurality of conceptual schemas is ruled out by Kant's work. It was Durkheim's misreading of Kant that introduced the framework model of epistemology into religious studies and this in turn has been passed on to such thinkers as Hick. Godlove maintains the significance of the universality of the categories, a point not developed by Hick. This difficulty is an important one but we will not pursue it directly in this thesis. The problems in Hick's epistemology may not be reflected in Kant's own system but may be a set of problems that necessarily arise from Hick's idiosyncratic use of Kant.

(b) Kantian Epistemology Assessed

Kant's dualist epistemology has been subjected to much discussion and diverse interpretations have been offered. In outlining some plausible responses to Kant we will be able to identify crucial implications for Hick's use of the Kantian insight for his own pluralist ends.

The Problem of Realism

Sayers raises questions concerning the viability of Kant's thought for any attempt at establishing cognitive realism. The components of thought that establish objectivity, universality and necessity must, Sayers points out, "go beyond" Kant's notion of sense experience. Because these components of objectivity are not given in experience, "this 'going beyond' is the work of thought".[1] Kant's claim that we make an active contribution to our knowledge leads Sayers to conclude that the result "must necessarily alter what is given and so 'produce' or 'create' something new."[2] The fundamental problem is that the notion of objectivity itself, or independently existing things, cannot be known through experience and, therefore, must be a construction of the mind. This "leads inevitably to the rejection of realism".[3] Sayers traces back to Engels the notion that Kant's epistemology is a form of "agnosticism".[4] Kant is agnostic regarding reality because he simultaneously maintains that there are things-in-themselves and that we cannot know or claim anything about them. Such agnosticism is found deeply unsatisfactory by Sayers:

[1] Sayers 1985 p.21
[2] Sayers 1985 p.21
[3] Sayers 1985 p.23
[4] Sayers 1985 p.90

> For, in it, the thing-in-itself is an idle and empty notion - something entirely abstract, indeterminate and unknowable: a seemingly pointless vestige of, and sop to, realism and materialism; a veritable nothing about which nothing can be said.[5]

Kant holds that there is something there and that we can know nothing about it. Such agnosticism, Sayers points out, has little practical difference from *aletheism* (or, in terms of the religious knowledge; atheism). The thing-in-itself when abstracted so completely from the possibilities of perceptual knowledge loses meaning and content. As Sayers points out, its function is merely a sop to realism which Kant made in order to distance himself from idealism. Furthermore, nothing is at stake in abandoning the 'empty notion' altogether along with its attendant realism and turn instead to some form of idealism or radical non-realist scepticism.[6]

Sayers points out, following Hegel's discussion, that in order to sustain realism it must be possible to identify a connection between thought and reality:

> Thought is the means by which we can penetrate beyond immediate appearances and the given data of the senses, and grasp the essential and underlying reality of things. Once this is understood, it is possible to acknowledge the Kantian and rationalist insight that thought contributes to knowledge, and yet resist the idealist implications ....[7]

Such an account of knowledge is exactly what Kant seeks to deny. Thought cannot penetrate beyond appearances because the objects of thought must, necessarily, be things as they appear to the thinking capacity. To penetrate beyond appearances would literally involve thinking the unthinkable or perceiving reality as it is

[5] Sayers 1985 p.90
[6] Sayers uses the example of Rorty as someone who makes this latter move (cf. Sayers 1985 p.91). We might add Cupitt as an example from theology.
[7] Sayers 1985 p.25

unperceived. However, Sayers offers an alternative synthesis which at least seems plausible. This synthesis involves both the concession that thought contributes to knowledge and the assertion that objective knowledge is possible. In order to adopt this synthesis Sayers must assume that categories of the mind exist not in spite of the structure of reality but exactly because that is the way reality is:

> Universality and necessity are not merely subjective creations of our minds. They have an objective being: they are the inherent characteristics of things-in-themselves, which exist objectively and independently of our thought.[8]

Sayers' assertion provides the possibility of a connection between thought and reality upon which realism could be founded. If retaining realism is important, and it is important for both Kant and Hick, then such a move is attractive. Unfortunately, assertion seems to be all that Sayers argument amounts to for there is little prospect for proving that subjective categories of the mind are also inherent in the world.[9] In the context of Kant's thought, no archimedian point exists from which to make this claim. The problem for Sayers' proposal is that he attempts to resolve the problem of realism from within Kant's model, though in Hegelian dress, rather than abandoning the epistemology altogether.

The Critical and the Pre-Critical in Kant

Schrader argues that Kant is essentially inconsistent on the problem of noumenal reality because of two rival tensions within his work. One is his critical position in keeping with the wider project of which he was a part[10] and as established through the

[8] Sayers 1985 p.27
[9] To be fair, Sayers' main point is to argue for the supremacy of Hegel's account of knowledge over Kant's and so the main concerns of his work are exposition of the differences between the two who otherwise shared so much (cf. Sayers 1985 p.21-25).
[10] The Enlightenment. See "What is Enlightenment?" in Kant 1963 for his declaration

main line of argument in the three critiques. The other strand of thought was Kant's pre-critical rationalism, commitment to God and pietism which, according to Schrader, constantly bedevilled his critical work.[11]

Schrader describes the main charge against Kant as being the incoherence of an unknowable thing-in-itself that can yet be known to exist. This is essentially the same problem as Sayers identifies regarding realism. In order to make his claim it seems that Kant must make an extension of the concepts of pure reason beyond their proper boundaries:

> One may posit the thing-in-itself as the cause of appearances which are known, but then one is guilty of extending the category of causality beyond the realm of appearances, a procedure which [Kant] had explicitly repudiated.[12]

It is simply not legitimate to claim that the noumenon is the cause of the phenomena for the category of causality belongs to the structure of the mind not to the thing-in-itself.[13] Schrader suggests that Kant's critical position does not permit the relationship of causality between noumenon and phenomena which "must be dismissed as reflecting Kant's private views" and "should not be regarded as central to his position."[14] The extension of any categories to the thing-in-itself also represents a "serious inconsistency"[15] but one not central to his critical thesis but, rather,

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of commitment to this project. Cf. Chapter 5 (a).

[11] Westphal argues that Kant's theism is a conscious element in his critical thought such that the thing-in-itself is only properly understood as the thing-for-God. (Westphal 1968 p.119)

[12] Schrader 1968 p.172

[13] A point also made by Copleston 1960 p.64.

[14] Schrader 1968 pp.174-175

[15] Schrader 1968 p.176

highlighting his "continuing struggle between rationalism and empiricism".[16] Schrader has his own alternative reading of Kant in which there is an attempt to solve this problem. However, given the more mainstream interpretation of Kant, with which Hick is working, the fundamental dilemma is now brought into view. This is the dilemma that any adoption of the Kantian epistemology must provide a description of the connection between noumenon and phenomena.[17] Kant's discussion is clouded by two incompatible objectives:

> The important point is that while Kant flatly declared that reality in itself is theoretically unknowable, he could not escape trying to formulate meaningful theoretical concepts of it.[18]

The same problem would seem to confront anyone who adopts a radical dualist conception of knowledge. Hick clearly does adopt this notion of truth and in order to do so he plays upon a feature of everyday experience that is proposed as evidence for his epistemic thesis. The feature is the obvious fact that the way we see things is influenced by cultural and intellectual factors along with normal physical limitations. Furthermore, from time to time we are confronted by the difference between the way we see things and how things really are. A straight stick in the water appears crooked, but, on inspection it proves to be a straight stick subject to an optical illusion caused by water and light. However, this feature of human experience certainly need not lead to the epistemic thesis proposed by Hick. The reason why we can identify cultural influences and optical illusions is because we believe that reality can be identified through experience and that the thoughts of our mind may be tested through encounter with reality. Reality is not a 'something else' beyond intellectual reach but is itself

[16] Schrader 1968 p.177
[17] Byrne applies this to Hick in Byrne 1991 p.125
[18] Schrader 1968 p.188

disclosed in experience. For this reason philosophy, theology or any other form of investigation is able to proceed on the assumption that closer approximations to truth as well as greater degrees of error are possible results of any study. The radical dualist thesis implicit in Kant's two worlds of truth does not permit such a possibility with regard to its reality: the noumenon.

The Problem for Ontology

Many critics have noted the serious consequences for Hick's position that results from his adoption of Kant's epistemology. Rowe considers the distinction between the Real as noumenon and the objects of belief as phenomena and asks what the remaining ontological status of the phenomenal descriptions of the deity is. His answer is one that Hick would deny but is consistent with Kantian dualism:

> Although Hick does not commit himself, I suspect that he thinks of them as analogous to 'veridical hallucinations' - no such entities really exist, but these 'appearances' are occasions of a salvation/liberation process in which human beings are transformed from self-centred to reality-centred beings.[19]

In keeping with Kant's thought it is not possible to describe phenomena as reality for they are always constructed by the mind in response to an unknown reality. Thus, Rowe is correct to describe the phenomena as non-existent. Hick should deny the actual *existence* of God, Christ, Allah, Vishnu, Brahman and so on. All he may postulate is the Real about which nothing may be said. However, as both Sayers and Schrader point out, the problem remains in Kant's work that a causal connection cannot be maintained between the Real and the appearances perceived by the categories of the understanding. Existence as a category cannot be applied to the Real-in-itself. It seems that the Real cannot be established in terms of a realist

[19] Rowe 1993 p.22

epistemology because such descriptions as independent existence cannot apply to it. Nor can the appearances within the religion shed light on the Real because no causal connection may be maintained. Hick's adoption of the Kantian epistemology involves an implicit denial of realism.[20]

Revisioning Realism

Hebblethwaite points out that while Hick has consistently remained committed to what he calls cognitive realism in religious claims, his "understanding of the truth-content of such implicit claims has undergone a sea-change".[21] Prior to the Kantian revolution in his work Hick had understood reality to be the object of religious experience and belief though described in partial and limited language and concepts. Through his use of Kant a gap is created between the objects of experience and belief and the Real:

> Despite the interpretative processing involved, Christian faith gave cognitive access to the noumenally real as actually being personal and gracious. But now, in the pluralist context, nearly all these alleged truths are transferred to the phenomenal level.[22]

This transferral of truth from noumenal to phenomenal is significant because it implies the shift of the realist heart of religion from the Real to appearances. The phenomenal level of reality is not actual reality and so the personal manifestations of the Real are not the Real. Therefore, cognitive realism and its attendant correspondence theory of truth no longer hold with regard to the objects of religious belief. According to Hick's

[20] Eddy 1994 further substantiates this claim.
[21] Hebblethwaite 1993 p.125
[22] Hebblethwaite 1993 pp.127-128

Kantian position, truth in religion is not a matter of the relationship between doctrinal claims and Ultimate Reality:

> One might still say that they remain true of that reality *as it appears* in one of its personalist manifestations. But Hick is more inclined to speak of them now as *myths*, expressive of religiously appropriate attitudes, namely attitudes conducive to ethical and spiritual transformation ....[23]

The reason why a new term such as *myth* must be introduced is that such claims are no longer true in a realist sense (correspondence) but true in a pragmatic sense of helping to shape our behaviour. We shall return to consider the plausibility of Hick's philosophy of language later[24] but here we note that the force compelling Hick to introduce myth as an interpretative device is the adoption of a Kantian epistemology.

Dualism and Judgement

Carruthers, following Lonergan, pursues the problem of dualism in Kant's work as it is found in the epistemology of Hick. Carruthers suggests that Kant's distinction arises from a confusion of two ways in which we use the term 'knowing':

> (1) the complex dynamic process of human knowing which experiences, understands and judges, and (2) the extroverted, biological or animal 'knowing' which simply experiences something as 'already out there now real'.[25]

While both types of knowing are constituitive of human knowledge only the former is distinctive of human knowledge. Human knowing involves the whole exercise of rationality and judgment rather than just perceptual knowledge. According to Carruthers, Kant collapses this distinction and really only produces a nuanced version

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[23] Hebblethwaite 1993 p.128
[24] Chapter 5 (b)
[25] Carruthers 1990 p.298

of the second type of knowing. The second type clearly only deals in appearances and lacks the important feature of the first type that goes beyond appearances to make judgements on what really is or is not the case. It is the element of judgment that introduces the possibility of drawing a distinction between how things appear to one and what things are really like:

> Judgment has its own set of conditions to be fulfilled before it can decide positively or negatively. It aims not at description, that is, not at things as they appear to the knower. It aims at things in themselves.[26]

Judgement exercises a crucial distinction between appearances and reality. It functions as a means of identifying which beliefs approximate reality more and appearance less. Kant limits possible knowledge to appearances and describes judgement as no more than the exercise of the categories in the ordering of appearances. Carruthers points out that he "has switched from knowing as taking a good look, to knowing as experiencing, understanding and judging."[27] Clearly the second type of knowledge Carruthers specifies, pre-critical knowledge, deals only in perception of appearances but no good reason is offered, certainly not by Hick, to restrict knowledge *in toto* to perceptual-type knowledge. Carruthers argues that the exercise of rationality is itself an example of a different type of knowing - one that identifies what a thing or things are really like behind their mere appearances.

Kant might retort that Carruthers is making impossible claims for knowledge by introducing the possibility of judging things-in-themselves. The problem that Kant has identified is that no such access to truth is possible for the human mind. However, as Sayers and Schrader point out, Kant cannot consistently maintain this dichotomy

[26] Carruthers 1990 p.299
[27] Carruthers 1990 p.299

between truth as reality and truth as appearance. They point out that Kant cannot consistently restrict the application of categories to appearances. Carruthers also identifies this inconsistency though he does so in a different way. He points out that Kant's entire epistemology is intended to describe what knowledge really is:

> .... Kant intends his description of human cognition not to be just an account of how cognition *appears*. Rather, he intends it as an account of *human-cognition-in-itself*. As such, he is claiming to have reached at least one thing-in-itself, namely, human cognition.[28]

If human cognition were restricted to appearances alone then Kant's epistemology would do no more than describe how cognition appears. However, Kant does not restrict his work in this way but intends his epistemology to be understood as a description of what human cognition really is. Carruthers has drawn out another example of the difficulty in restricting categories and concepts to phenomena alone. Any theory that attempts to maintain a realist component - whether with regard to God or human cognition - must permit the exercise of rationality in describing at least some aspects of the 'noumenon'. The resulting description would not, of course, be the noumenon in terms of a Kantian definition, but would mark a description of the thing-in-itself and not appearances only.

Kant's distinction between noumenon and phenomena cannot be consistently maintained. Hick's use of the Kantian epistemology in this respect is problematic for exactly these reasons. If the Real is truly and strictly beyond the categories and the concepts provided by religion and culture then certainly nothing could be said of it and, as a result, it can only be a 'nothing' of which not even existence can be predicated. Furthermore, not only are the objects of religious devotion to be

[28] Carruthers 1990 p.299

distinguished from the Real in-itself but there is no way of connecting those objects to the Real. Hick describes them as "manifestations of the Real"[29] but, owing to the radical epistemic thesis underlying his claims, such 'manifestation' has no causal connection for causality is a category of the understanding and not applicable to the thing-in-itself.

Hick maintains that while our concepts do not apply to the Real we may "make certain purely formal statements about the postulated Real".[30] Hick suggests two such statements: that the Real is "that than which no greater can be conceived" and that the Real is "the noumenal ground of the encountered gods".[31] These formal statements look encouraging, particularly as the former seems to relate Hick's position to the theological tradition of Anselm.[32] However, in the light of the Kantian epistemology both of these statements are empty of content. In the latter statement it is difficult to substantiate what Hick means by "ground", particularly as the Kantian position must rule out a causal connection. It seems most likely that Hick does mean something like a causal connection and, if so, then this statement suffers all of the objections Schrader levels at Kant. The former statement can only be a limiting notion: nothing greater than the Real can be conceived because the Real itself cannot be conceived. The word 'greater' has no theological significance for Hick but is simply lip service to Anselm's theological position. Anselm clearly did intend something substantive by his use of 'greater'. For example, in his response to Gaunilo he writes:

> For we attribute to the divine substance anything of which it can be conceived that it is better to be than not to be that thing. For example:

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[29] Hick 1989a p.243
[30] Hick 1989a p.246
[31] Hick 1989a p.246
[32] Hick draws attention to this similarity in Hick 1989a p.246.

> it is better to be eternal than not eternal; good, than not good; nay, goodness itself, than not goodness itself.[33]

By 'greater' Anselm sought to relate God to His self-revelation as good, eternal, existent and so on. Such specification is not open to Hick for whom such terms would represent an illicit bridge between the Real and its phenomenal manifestations. Hick uses Anselm's proposition as only a limiting concept. His point is that the noumenon is beyond all conception. Such an empty notion shares absolutely nothing with Anselm's ontological argument despite Hick's positive references.[34]

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[33] Anselm "St. Anselm's Reply to Gaunilo" in Plantinga 1968.
[34] Hence, Loughlin claims "At the centre of Hick's universe of faiths there is an 'empty space'," which he likens to Barthes' Tokyo, a city which turns around a forbidden and empty centre (Loughlin 1987 p.505).

(c) Kant's Interpretation of Religion

Hick explicitly acknowledges his debt to Kant's basic epistemological insight but distances himself from other features of his philosophy. In particular, Hick identifies religious experience as the ground of belief whereas Kant understood the existence of God to be a postulate of moral experience. However, in this part we shall outline general features of Kant's philosophy of religion in order to argue that Hick's work shares many more features with Kant than he acknowledges. In fact, it will be argued that the mature statement Hick provides of his own position is very similar to that of Kant.

Moral Religion

Kant's Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone[1] is often understood to be primarily concerned with ethics. While he argued that morality "needs no representation of an end which must precede the determining of the will", no need of a religious superstructure, nonetheless "it is quite possible that it is necessarily related to such an end".[2] This is because Kant recognised that the determining of the will may require a *telos* which only religion can provide. In fact, Kant claimed that the determining of the will toward a moral end does require just such a teleology; that represented by the *summum bonum* or highest good.[3]

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[1] Kant 1960 (1793)
[2] Kant 1960 p.4
[3] See Kant Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals (Kant 1959a). As Copleston describes the connection between the achievement of the highest good and the purpose of human existence; "the attainment of the first element of the *summum bonum*, the pursuit of which is commanded by the moral law, is possible only on the supposition that the soul is immortal." (Copleston 1960 p.130)

> Morality thus leads ineluctably to religion, through which it extends itself to the idea of a powerful moral Lawgiver, outside of mankind, for Whose will that is the final end (of creation) which at the same time can and ought to be man's final end.[4]

It is from the foundations in ethics that Kant was led to consider the nature and function of religion in the human life and so, as has often been noted, Kant's emphasis on religion is always found in moral terms.[5]

The Freedom of the Will

Because Kant is concerned to establish the validity and meaning of religion in terms of moral categories he begins his discussion with a consideration of the origins of evil and human nature in relation to God. Kant is clear that the origin of evil lies in the exercise of free will:

> Man *himself* must make or have made himself into whatever, in a moral sense, whether good or evil, he is or is to become. Either condition must be an effect of his free choice; for otherwise he could not be held responsible for it and could be *morally* neither good nor evil.[6]

Created good, human beings were also created free and with this freedom of the will came the responsibility to choose good or evil. Kant seems to be deliberately opposing the Augustinian or Calvinist emphasis on the bondage of the will to sin and consequent inability to choose the good without the intervention of grace.[7] Kant

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[4] Kant 1960 pp.5-6

[5] Despland 1973 argues that the emphasis on morality has led commentators to misinterpret Kant's theology as purely moralistic and he offers an alternative interpretation that does not lead to such a caricature. Of course, Kant's work is not *purely* moralistic but it is clear that, as our discussion will show, morality provides the norm and standard for all theological inquiry (See also Palmquist 1992).

[6] Kant 1960 p.40

[7] Calvin 1949 esp. vol. 1 Book 2 Chapter 5 (pp.272-291) i.e. "[Paul] teaches that

stresses the importance of free will because, according to his system, it is only through the possibility of free choice to sin that human beings can be morally culpable for sinful behaviour. Furthermore, because the choice of the good is also utterly free and undetermined, the human being is also responsible for choosing the good. This possibility is sustained by Kant through his denial that people are utterly devoid of the good: "a seed of goodness still remains in its entire purity"[8]. Human beings must be capable, argues Kant, of doing what is right without the need for some kind of supernatural miracle of grace; "For when the moral law commands that we *ought* now to be better men, it follows inevitably that we must *be able* to be better men".[9] Evil could not be evil were it impossible to comply with the moral demand not to do evil. It is only because people have the option not to do evil that they act wrongly when they do evil. The important implications of Kant's consideration is that there is no need for special acts of God in redemption or grace in order for people to choose to do good rather than evil. People are created with the seed of goodness which enables them to do good and be held responsible for their own actions when they do wrong. We shall now see how this anthropology opens the possibility for Kant's description of religion as universal.

The Reinterpretation of Christianity

The essence of religion, for Kant, is the moral law or imperative. In the light of this he interprets the historical particularities of Christianity. The incarnation is the

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salvation is prepared for those only on whom the Lord is pleased to bestow mercy - that ruin and death await all whom he has not chosen" (p.289) for which Calvin is interpreting Romans 9:18. Kant cites the same verse in Romans but, in contrast to Calvin, describes it as a teaching which "taken according to the letter, is the *salto mortale* of human reason" (Kant 1960 p.111). Reardon 1988 pp.93-100 provides an alternative perspective.

[8] Kant 1960 p.41

[9] Kant 1960 p.46

personification of the good principle and so Jesus Christ is the example or archetype of what all people are to be. However, the historical Jesus has only a contingent relationship to the archetype:

> We need therefore, no empirical example to make the idea of a person morally well-pleasing to God our archetype; this idea as an archetype is already present in our reason.[10]

The historical Jesus is only a representation of the archetype which itself exists in each one of us and is accessible through the exercise of pure reason. Kant chides those whose imitation of Jesus depends upon his metaphysical identity. If one does not recognise the authority of the archetype but demands the credentials of one who embodies the archetype then one shows "moral *unbelief*" or "lack of faith in virtue" and "This is a lack which no belief that rests upon miracles (and is merely historical) can repair."[11] Kant's description of the person and work of Christ dispenses with reference to the supernatural. Regarding Christ's essential teaching, the gospel, Kant writes:

> he declared that servile belief (taking the form of confessions and practices on days of divine worship) is essentially vain and that moral faith, which alone renders men holy 'as their Father in heaven is holy' and which proves its genuineness by a good course of life, is the only saving faith.[12]

Kant claims that Jesus taught the same message of using free choice to choose the good and not evil as himself. The centrality of Christ's work was in the message he brought rather than its historical particularity. Concerning the resurrection and ascension Kant has little patience. He describes these as belonging to "more secret

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[10] Kant 1960 p.56
[11] Kant 1960 p.56
[12] Kant 1960 p.119

records .... added as a sequel" to the public gospel records and which, taken literally, lead to problematic paradoxes. Kant prefers to interpret them through pure reason as symbolic accounts which "would signify the commencement of another life and entrance into the seat of salvation".[13] In other words, Kant argues that if these supernatural events really did take place then they give rise to many perplexing problems and yet have no positive contribution to the fundamental purpose of religion. If they are understood as mythological ways of describing hope in an ultimate good realised in the after-life, the presupposition of the *summum bonum*, then they give pictorial expression to an idea already accessible through pure reason. Kant also treats the death of Christ in a similar way. He acknowledges that "in this mode of representation" the moral requirement for the "new man" to suffer and die to the old self each day "is pictured as a death endured once for all by the representative of mankind".[14] Consequently, Kant continues to use the language of atonement and vicarious suffering but identifies these as pictorial uses of language designed to convey truths accessible through the pure reason.

Kant clearly engaged in a radical reappraisal of Christian belief in which he reinterpreted the importance of miracles and historical events in terms of their meaning for us. This should not be understood as simply an expression of his doubt in the possibility of miracles. Kant does not deny that miracles may occur and so he cannot be simply categorised as anti-supernaturalist.[15] However, he is sharply critical

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[13] Kant 1960 p.119
[14] Kant 1960 p.69 cf. pp.119-120
[15] Kant 1960 pp.79-84. Kant claims that "sensible men" may "believe *in theory* that there are such things as miracles but they do not warrant them *in the affairs of life*." (p.80) His point is that while one may believe in miracles as a part of theoretical reason, one cannot accept by practical reason that any particular miracle has taken place for to do so would lead to all kinds of disruption in public order.

of any interpretation of religion that gives a necessary status to any alleged miracle or, indeed, to any historical event. The following quotation makes clear the place of miracles:

> If a moral religion (which must consist not in dogmas and rites but in the heart's disposition to fulfil all human duties as divine commands) is to be established, all *miracles* which history connects with its inauguration must themselves in the end render superfluous the belief in miracles in general ....[16]

Kant claims that it is morally wrong to demand miracles to attest the validity of moral commands. Valid moral commands are already engraved on the human heart as the seed of goodness and known through the exercise of reason as self-authenticating. Thus, miracles would be attesting only their own irrelevance.

Universal Religion

This treatment of miracles extends to Kant's treatment of all historical particularities. One essential feature of Kant's moral religion is its universal applicability. Runzo describes Kant's assumption that necessary knowledge must be universally accessible to the rational human:

> he feels that the claims of rational religion are universally valid, that any rational being who possesses the appropriate conceptual resources will arrive at the same, fully epistemically justified conclusions.[17]

The difference between moral (universal) religion and particular religions (described by Kant as ecclesiastical faiths[18]) is that pure moral religion "can be believed in and

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[16] Kant 1960 p.79
[17] Runzo 1993 p.102
[18] In contrast to modern terminology Kant defines "faith" as particular religions "Jewish, Mohammedan, Christian, Catholic, Lutheran" but underlying these he

shared by everyone" while "an historical faith, grounded solely on facts, can extend its influence no further than tidings of it can reach".[19] This point returns us once more to Kant's anthropology. Because moral transformation is accessible to all people through the exercise of pure reason, religion itself must be definable in universal terms. To restrict religion to its historical particularities, miracles and so forth, is to confuse the core of religion, moral transformation, with the external trappings in which it appears. Furthermore, to restrict religion to a particular faith is then to introduce the necessity of believing that factual and historical claims are true thus denying the self-authenticating nature of moral religion and making it "dependent upon the capacity (of men) to judge the credibility of such tidings".[20] It is for these reasons that Kant abandons the category of revelation at least in the sense commonly described as special revelation. The moral law is made known by reason not by revelation. To suppose otherwise is to deny its universality. If God revealed "statutory legislation" then it would be merely "contingent" and "something which never has applied or can apply to every man, hence as not binding on all men universally".[21] So the demands of religion must be accessible to reason alone. If revelation were to supersede reason and introduce any element otherwise unknown then Kant's anthropology would be faulty. Kant proposes that religion be understood in terms of these universal moral categories rather than particular revealed doctrines, beliefs or dogmas:

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identifies the "*one* (true) *religion*" (Kant 1960 p.98). So faiths are particular examples of the universal, general category known as "religion". Compare with Wilfred Cantwell Smith 1963 who adopts the opposite terminology. By "ecclesiastical faith" Kant means the particularity of faith as a human institution in the form of a church with its clergy, rites, dogmas and so forth. He also describes particular faiths as "empirical faiths" (i.e. Kant 1960 p.100) in order to emphasise that a faith is the external, observable form of moral religion.

[19] Kant 1960 p.94

[20] Kant 1960 p.94

[21] Kant 1960 p.95

> .... they who seek to become well-pleasing to Him not by praising Him (or his envoy, as a being of divine origin) according to revealed concepts which not every man can have, but by a good course of life, regarding which every-one knows His will - these are they who offer Him the true veneration which He desires.[22]

This abandonment of special revelation in favour of universal moral reason leads to a new assessment of particular faiths. The Bible is not to be identified as special revelation. Rather, it is "fortunate" that "along with its statutes" that claim to have been revealed, it contains "the purest moral doctrine of religion in its completeness".[23] Consequently, Kant holds a deep respect for the Bible without regarding it as either revelation or a witness to revelation. In fact, it is to be judged and interpreted by the moral dictates of pure reason:

> an exposition of the revelation which has come into our possession is required, that is, a thorough-going interpretation of it in a sense agreeing with the universal practical rules of a religion of pure reason.[24]

Kant even concedes that the interpretation may be "forced" and completely depart from the literal interpretation of the text but if the resulting interpretation is more in line with moral reason then it must be preferred.[25] He points out that this practice is, as a matter of fact, engaged in by Jews, Christians, Hindus and Muslims in order to reconcile their own scriptures with the moral commands of pure reason.[26]

The problem Kant identifies for religious beliefs based on events in history or claims to special revelation is that the beliefs can only be contingent. Kant's anthropology

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[22] Kant 1960 pp.95-96
[23] Kant 1960 p.98
[24] Kant 1960 p.100
[25] Kant 1960 p.101
[26] Kant 1960 p.102

describes salvation, moral transformation, as universal and, therefore, true religion must share this universal quality. Jesus Christ, the atonement and the Bible are all useful insofar as they enable us to come to terms with the moral law. Kant declares that the atonement "merely constitutes the vehicle for pure religious faith."[27] Doctrines and beliefs serve useful, pragmatic functions but they are only ever optional and contingent. Their real end is the furtherance of pure moral religion and as this end becomes realised they may be dispensed with. This gives rise to Kant's vision for the future of religion. In order to describe this we will first step back and consider his account of the origins of religion.

The History of Religion

Kant's interpretation of Judaism is certainly faulty but, if we set aside the validity of his interpretation, the treatment he gives provides a useful outline of his own history of religions. He describes three important features of Judaism.

(i) A Collection of laws

Firstly, it is "a collection of mere statutory laws".[28] As we have seen, Kant describes statutory laws as particularities of only contingent validity. Because it is no more than this, Judaism fails to have universal validity:

> Judaism is really not a religion at all but merely a union of a number of people who, since they belonged to a particular stock, formed themselves into a commonwealth under purely political laws .... it was *intended* to be merely an earthly state .... [29]

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[27] Kant 1960 p.109
[28] Kant 1960 p.116
[29] Kant 1960 p.116

All the laws and dogmas of Judaism were bound up with preserving the political stability and order of a national race. They neither had nor intended to have universal validity. Thus the legislation in which the Ten Commandments are found do not display the dictates of pure reason, the transformation of the heart, but "are directed to absolutely nothing but outer observance".[30] Kant interprets Judaism as a faith that fails to meet his criteria for true religion.

(b) Preoccupied with this world

Secondly, Judaism portrays all judgements and rewards for moral behaviour as occurring in this world. The notion of an ultimate reward or punishment is missing. As Kant understands this to be a presupposition of morality, Judaism fails to embody the very core of the one true religion that underlies particular faiths. This leads on to the denial of a future existence beyond the grave:

> Furthermore, since no religion can be conceived of which involves no belief in a future life, Judaism, which, when taken in its purity is seen to lack this belief, is not a religious faith at all.[31]

Once more, Kant defines religion in such a way as to exclude those that do not fit the conceptual scheme he is seeking to substantiate. The absence of an after life, implying with it the absence of a *summum bonum* undermines Kant's notion of morality and duty.[32] Thus, any faith that fails to incorporate an after life cannot be an expression of the moral religion.

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[30] Kant 1960 p.116
[31] Kant 1960 p.117
[32] For Kant duty is the categorical imperative, it is to act with no regard to benefits or effects of one's actions. Nonetheless, his ethics must be related to his wider teleological conception of final reward and punishment.

(c) Exclusivist Assumptions

Thirdly, Judaism fails in the requirements of universality because of its foundational belief in its status as the covenant community chosen by God. This form of exclusivism runs directly against Kant's anthropology. It was expressed by the Jews, according to Kant, as "enmity toward all other peoples and which, therefore, evoked the enmity of all".[33] Essentially, Kant understood Judaism to be a form of political nationalism concerned primarily with maintaining racial purity through separatism. Its beliefs and dogmas share features with other faiths but, within the Judaic framework, do not have the purpose of displaying true moral religion. Rather, their function is to maintain order, stability and preservation in the face of chaos and disorder.

Kantian Eschatology

Such an estimation raises grave questions over the viability of the faith which owes most to Judaism. Kant accepts that Christianity arose historically from Judaism but claims that it was founded on "a wholly new principle" which replaced political nationalism with the seeds of "a purely moral religion".[34] Most of the major world religions are, for Kant, faiths that embody, perhaps in embryo form, the one true religion. Within Christian prophetic writing, Kant believes that he finds the hope that one day pure moral religion will entirely replace the mythological forms in which that religion is currently found in the empirical faiths. There is an evolutionary schema underlying Kant's hope; "in the end religion will gradually be freed from all empirical determining grounds and from all statutes which rest on history."[35] The particularities of special revelation or of history only fulfil an interim purpose of realising the good in people's lives. Yet, as we have seen, such particularities are only contingent and,

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[33] Kant 1960 p.117
[34] Kant 1960 p.118
[35] Kant 1960 p.112

while provisionally useful, obstruct the realisation of true universality. Therefore, future history will be marked by their gradual abandonment and "at last the pure religion of reason will rule over all".[36] From the perspective of this ultimate end the value of empirical faiths is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, a religion may have "useful influence as a vehicle" to moral transformation but, on the other hand, when their dogmas and rites are held to have universal validity then they encourage the "illusory duty of divine worship".[37] It is the moral element of the faiths that is to be praised and will one day come to fruition. The doxological and doctrinal components are open to misinterpretation by the unenlightened who fail to see their pictorial status. However, Kant does suggest that a divine principle will be involved in this gradual evolution from empirical faiths to the one religion and this principle leads to a definition of revelation:

> The basis for the transition to that new order of affairs must lie in the principle that the pure religion of reason is a continually occurring divine (though not empirical) revelation for all men.[38]

Thus Kant has a doctrine of revelation but it is in no way "special" or particular and must not be understood in spatial metaphors as if it came to us from without or beyond. As Wood notes, the recognition of our moral duties as divine commands and the rational faith in God this entails may be seen as; "a kind of 'revelation' to us by God himself, a revelation through universally communicable human reason, rather than through experience or feeling."[39] Because Kant understands revelation to be an inner experience of illumination there is no pressing need to understand revelation in

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[36] Kant 1960 p.112
[37] Kant 1960 p.113
[38] Kant 1960 p.113
[39] Wood 1970 p.205

any personal or propositional terms as the disclosure of God. Rather, revelation occurs with the apprehension of pure reason. In effect, revelation and the activity of reason are indistinguishable.

Conclusions

We have now outlined the main lines of Kant's interpretation of religion as they are to be found in Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone. We may summarise the outline in the following form. Kant's anthropology presupposes libertarian free will and the inherent possibility of goodness in all people. The moral law is accessible through reason alone and provides the interpretation of all faiths and their claims to revelation. Empirical faiths are categorised as vehicles through which this universal moral law is made known. Kant's history of religions treats Judaism as an historical forerunner of empirical faiths but not as a religion itself, lacking as it does the three key elements in religion. Empirical faiths are themselves useful, conveying the moral law and the archetype of moral life through pictorial and representational language use. These faiths are passing as, with the rise of the Enlightenment, human beings find within themselves the moral imperative and a rational faith in the existence of God. These discoveries will make historical particularities in which faiths are bound up redundant. Through the historical process the one, true moral religion will replace these temporary, though useful, empirical faiths. We are now in a position to draw out a more nuanced account of the connections between Kant and Hick's philosophy of religion. We will see that, fundamentally, they are engaged in exactly the same project and operate with largely the same philosophy of religion.

(d) Hick's Debt to Kant

Hick's mature position as found in An Interpretation of Religion is structurally very similar to that of Kant in its basic philosophy of religion. In the light of this, differences between the two thinkers regarding epistemology are slight and, therefore, we will conclude that it is appropriate to describe Hick's work as Kantian and, therefore, a part of the same enlightenment project.[1]

Freedom and Morality

Kant is committed to a strong view of libertarian free will. This results from the close connection he makes between human responsibility and the origin of evil. For human beings to be capable of acting in an evil way presupposes that they have the freedom to choose between good and evil. Only the reality of freedom provides the necessary foundations for morality. In this way, morality also *precedes* religion. For Kant, moral commands are known through universal reason; they do not depend upon external authorities such as revelation or church councils. Johnson describes the connection Kant draws between morality and religion:

> [Kant] argues that morality cannot be based on God's will as the source of divine moral law, for that would reduce human freedom to a sham freedom to obey an 'other'. Yet he argues that morality *can* be based on universal law which we rationally give to ourselves .... we are free just insofar as we are autonomous, that is, just to the extent that we give

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[1] The Kantian influence on Hick is acknowledged by all but few press it as far as we shall here. For example, Eddy describes Hick's mature work as a neo-Kantian proposal but comments that "The term 'neo-Kantian' is used throughout this essay in a very general sense; it implies no connection to the German philosophical movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." (Eddy 1994 p.467). See also D'Costa 1991 p.4, Loughlin 1987 p.497-498 and Ramachandra 1996 pp.117-125.

moral laws *to ourselves* of our rationality and freedom.[2]

Kant did not ground moral perception in the revelation or will of God but in the universal reason of the human race. Salvation is, for Kant, the pursuit of the good rather than evil. Moral transformation of the self through right exercise of free will constitutes salvation. One of the great theological controversies of history is implicit in this problem. This is the question regarding the exact relationship between faith and works or, more accurately, between justification by faith and justification by moral behaviour.[3] Kant grants that "saving faith" involves both "faith in an atonement" (understood as a representation of God doing something for people that they cannot do for themselves) and "faith that we can become well-pleasing to God through a good course of life in the future."[4] However, Kant resists admitting that some kind of paradoxical relationship holds the two together. If saving faith requires both atonement and good works then adherence to a historical faith such as Christianity will be necessary for salvation. If that is true then the non-Christian is unable to be saved and, if unable to be saved, not morally responsible for their exercise of free will. Kant resolves this paradox:

> Where shall we start, i.e., with a faith in what God has done on our behalf, or with what we are to do to become worthy of God's assistance (whatever this may be)? In answering this question we cannot hesitate in deciding for the second alternative.[5]

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[2] Johnson 1993 p.25
[3] In the New Testament the focus of the controversy may be seen as one of how to harmonise Romans 4:4-5 and James 2:24.
[4] Kant 1960 p.106
[5] Kant 1960 p.108

Saving faith is identified with moral transformation. Moral transformation is through the increasing obedience of people to the commands of pure reason. Thus, religion is secondary to moral faith and the latter takes precedence over the former.

Hick also presents this conception of saving faith as it is expressed both in his epistemology and in his soteriology. The three step diagram clarifies this point

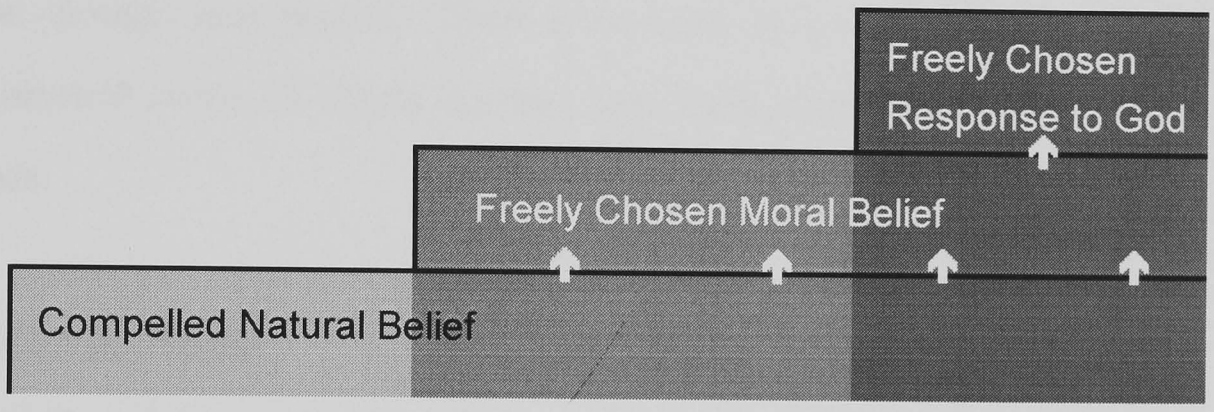

Figure 5 Faith and Works

The order of each step is important for Hick. Without the natural interpretation of our environment there would be no situation to experience in moral or religious terms and so this must be the basic level of experience. The moral level of experience involves the free exercise of the will in responding to our environment. The religious interpretation of the universe is described by Hick as a total interpretation because while it involves its own distinctive religious experience it also subsumes the previous levels of experience. For both Hick and Kant, 'religion' (in Kant's own terminology we mean historical or ecclesiastical faith) arises from moral and natural experience. The only difference between them is that, for Hick, the religious interpretation also benefits from an extra element of experience. Nonetheless, they both maintain that even without the influence of religion anyone could still successfully interpret the moral and natural significance of the universe. Hick identifies the Golden Rule given

by Jesus Christ to do to others only what you would want them to do for yourself with Kant's description of pure morality. It:

> is a translation of Kant's concepts of a rational person as an end and of right action as action which our rationality, acknowledging a universal impartiality transcending individual desires and aversions, can see to be required.[6]

Hick shares with Kant an assumption that morality is based upon universal truths arrived at through pure reason. There is no need for special claims to revelation, grace, historical events or rituals in order both to identify and to enact these moral commands.

Justification By Works

A consequence of their shared position is, in effect, an endorsement of a Pelagian view of salvation. Pelagius had been a critic of Augustine's views on morality and grace. His statement of salvation was later rejected by the Church under the influence of Augustine. Pelagius attacked Augustine's notion of original sin on the grounds that it compromised human free will:

> Everything good and everything evil, in respect of which we are either worthy of praise or of blame, is *done by us*, not *born with us*. We are not born in our full development, but with a capacity for good and evil .... [7]

God, having given us the capacity for good, may be praised for the good that people do but Pelagius argues that the responsibility for doing good lies with the individuals

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[6] Hick 1989a p.149

[7] Pelagius *Pro libero arbitrio* in Bettenson 1967 p.53. See further Berkhof 1991 pp.132f. and for a reassessment of Pelagius see Ferguson 1980.

themselves. He identifies the same logical point as Kant would do centuries later that if one had no choice but to do evil then one would not be responsible for it. Pelagius declared that "[God] has not willed to command anything impossible, for he is righteous; and he will not condemn a man for what he could not help, for he is holy."[8] Kant and Hick join Pelagius in his description of libertarian free will and its relationship to the possibility of salvation. They do so because they assume good moral behaviour to be autonomous and not dependent on any religion. As a result they both make clear distinctions between historical particularities of religion and the moral commands known through pure reason. Kant's hope for the future is that "in the end religion will gradually be freed from all empirical determining grounds", including doctrines, rituals and scriptures "which through the agency of ecclesiastical faith provisionally unite men for the requirements of the good; and thus at last the pure religion of reason will rule over all".[9] The religion of reason is the religion of morality which Kant is able to distinguish clearly from the metaphysical doctrines of ecclesiastical faith in which it currently occurs. Hick makes the same distinction:

> In principle, then, and to a considerable extent in practice, we can separate out basic moral values from both the magical-scientific and the metaphysical beliefs which have always entered into their application within particular cultures.[10]

Kant and Hick both share the conviction that there is a universal moral code accessible to all people and distinguishable from the various particular religions of the world. Also, both grant the necessity of the freedom of the will in order to make sense of moral responsibility. For this reason, salvation is able to occur wherever there are human beings. If all people are morally responsible then it follows from the logic of

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[8] Pelagius *Epistle ad Demetriadem* in Bettenson 1967 p.52
[9] Kant 1960 p.112
[10] Hick 1989a p.312

this position that all people are able to be morally good and, therefore, saved. This leads both thinkers to endorse a Pelagian view of salvation. Furthermore, it leads to a second major point of connection between them: the universality of religion.

The Essence of Universal Religion

In order to sustain the universal accessibility of salvation through moral behaviour Kant maintains that the core of religion lies in essential moral rules. He distinguishes between moral religion and historic faiths: "*Pure religious faith* alone can found a universal church; for only (such) rational faith can be believed in and shared by everyone".[11] Historical faiths dependent upon particular revelations or concepts have not been and cannot be shared by everyone. Therefore, such particularities cannot be of the essence of religion. Hick pursues this same line of thought and also distinguishes between the essence of religion and its particularities. An example of this is found in his treatment of conflicting historical truth claims. These could, in principle, be settled "by unbiased assessment of the historical evidence"[12] though, in practice, Hick points out that historical research is influenced by bias and not all the relevant data is accessible. However, he also relativises the status of these contentious historical claims. He argues that a growing number of people, himself included, "no longer regard such questions as being of the essence of their faith".[13] If one were to maintain that historical claims were in some way essential to faith then, Hick concedes, his entire project would be undermined:

> But it remains true that for many other believers [historical claims] *are* of the essence of their faith, so that no amount of evidence could ever change their conviction, and that for such persons the pluralist vision may well at

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[11] Kant 1960 p.94
[12] Hick 1989a p.364
[13] Hick 1989a p.365

present be inaccessible.[14]

Hick also applies this distinction to those trans-historical but still 'particular' beliefs such as reincarnation. Because moral transformation can be seen to happen among those who adopt very different trans-historical doctrines Hick claims that concerning their validity "the question is not soteriologically vital".[15] Soteriology is defined as moral transformation which both Kant and Hick identify with the dictates of a universal moral code. It then follows that all these historical particularities have a secondary status in their work. Whatever religion we assess, whether Buddhism, Christianity or Confucianism, Hick maintains that the universal moral law is identifiable:

> Implicit within these we can discern the utterly basic principle that it is evil to cause suffering to others and good to benefit others and to alleviate or prevent their sufferings. This is so fundamental and universally accepted a principle that it is seldom formulated.[16]

Hick identifies much of the particularities of faiths with mythology[17] and, in so doing, draws a distinction between the secondary and primary components of faith. The primary are those that are necessary for his anthropology. These are the universal moral laws embodied in the golden rule.

The History of Religions

Another example of their shared commitment to the reality of a universal religion is found in their parallel descriptions of the history of religions. Hick treats the history

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[14] Hick 1989a p.365
[15] Hick 1989a p.369
[16] Hick 1989a p.312
[17] See Chapter 5 (b).

of religions in terms of two stages. The first stage of religion is "pre-axial".[18] These are the very ancient, often pre-literate, religions that still exist today in some parts of the world. Pre-axial religions are excluded from Hick's pluralist account because they have a much more limited function than the great world religions which occurred after the flowering of religious consciousness in the axial age. There are two dimensions to pre-axial religion. Firstly, there is the psychological function of religion:

> an attempt to make stable sense of life, and particularly of the basic realities of subsistence and propagation and the final boundaries of birth and death.[19]

Secondly, they have a sociological function described by Hick as: "preserving the unity of the tribe or people within a common world-view and at the same time of validating the community's claims upon the loyalty of its members."[20] Pre-axial religions enable their members to make coherent sense of life in terms of the boundaries of birth and death along with creating a coherent society where people find stability in union with one another. Pre-axial religion was clearly not concerned with metaphysical doctrines about a transcendent being or even life after death. Hick notes that some sense of life being extended beyond the grave "seems almost always to have been assumed" but describes this sense as "shadowy" and the "shades" who populated this death world were to be "pitied"[21] rather than envied.

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[18] Hick 1989a p.22
[19] Hick 1989a p.23
[20] Hick 1989a p.23
[21] Hick 1989a p.27

Primitive Religion

Kant describes Judaism in remarkably similar terms to Hick's treatment of pre-axial religion. Hick would place Judaism in the axial period but in this discussion the accuracy of Kant's description of Judaism is not at issue. We have already seen that Kant denies Judaism to really be a religion at all. Early, or pure, Judaism was "a collection of mere statutory laws upon which was established a political organisation".[22] The laws of Judaism are understood to be "a prudent device for creating docility".[23] Judaism fails to count as a religion for Kant for the same reasons that Hick denies pre-axial religions a place in the pluralist scheme. It is concerned with the outer appearances of social cohesion and tribal security. It safeguards racial purity in the face of the chaotic and pluralist forces ranged against it. According to Kant, Judaism does not offer worship to the transcendental being which is a necessary postulate of pure reason. The Jewish God is "merely an earthly regent making absolutely no claims upon, and no appeals to, conscience."[24] In addition to this, Kant describes Judaism as devoid of belief in any future life.

The Evolution of Religious Consciousness

The axial period is the second stage in Hick's history of religion. It gave rise to a new era of cosmic optimism in religion. Hick notes that during this period all the major religious options were formed and each share a common assumption that moral transformation is both necessary and possible: "Thus all these post-axial faiths are soteriologically oriented."[25] The common essence of post-axial faith is the golden rule of moral duty to one's neighbour. According to Kant, Christianity marks a

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[22] Kant 1960 p.116
[23] Kant 1960 p.117
[24] Kant 1960 p.116
[25] Hick 1989a p.33

complete break with Judaism on this point. Its defining feature is that it "was to comprise a religion valid for the world"[26] and not just a tribal or local political grouping. While Kant leaves little doubt that Christianity is the most effective vehicle for spreading universal religion, he maintains that the universal religion is present in all historical faiths. Its universality rests in its soteriological core of moral duty which is accessible without reference to revelation through the activity of pure reason:

> The one true religion comprises nothing but laws, that is, those practical principles of whose unconditioned necessity we can become aware, and which we therefore recognise as revealed through pure reason (not empirically).[27]

Matters of history, dogma and ritual may be constituitive of a faith but, for Kant, religion is moral duty and that duty is known through reason not special experience of any sort. Hick and Kant both identify moral duty as the heart of religion.

The Reducibility of Metaphor and Religious Language

Hick and Kant maintain the reducibility of metaphysical and metaphorical language to a form largely compatible with naturalism or the physical sciences. They both regard the great, distinctive doctrines of Christianity as representational or symbolic uses of language. We will consider Hick's philosophy of language in more detail a little later[28] but here we may describe in outline form his treatment of key Christian doctrines.

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[26] Kant 1960 p.118
[27] Kant 1960 p.156
[28] Chapter 5 (b).

Hick maintains that in the New Testament descriptions of Jesus he can identify "both the optional and the mythological character of this traditional language".[29] He identifies the literal person of Jesus as a man "intensely and overwhelmingly conscious of the reality of God" and, in his presence, others "felt the absolute claim of God" confronting them.[30] The metaphor, Son of God or God the Son, is a linguistic device which "offers a way of declaring his significance to the world; and it expresses a disciple's commitment to Jesus as his personal Lord."[31] The metaphors are ways of representing elements of experience of, or response to, the historical figure of Jesus.

Hick also treats the atonement as an example of pictorial language. The theological doctrine of original sin, for which atonement is required, is rejected by Hick "except as a mythological way of referring to the fact of universal human imperfection".[32] Hick claims that belief in a historical fall "is totally unbelievable for educated Christians"[33] in the light of findings in anthropology and geology. However, he concedes that the language is still permissible in the sense that "we can say that the earliest humans were, metaphorically speaking, already 'fallen' in the sense of being morally and spiritually imperfect".[34] While rejecting any theory of the atonement, Hick maintains the representational value of the language insofar as it conveys metaphorically a range of universal truths about human nature.

Hick has failed to give any sustained treatment to the doctrine of the Trinity but given his remarks on other related Christian beliefs it is not difficult to surmise the appraisal

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[29] Hick 1977b p.168
[30] Hick 1977b p.172
[31] Hick 1977b p.178
[32] Hick 1993a p.115
[33] Hick 1993a p.116
[34] Hick 1993a p.116

he would make. He denies that God could be "ontologically three" but interprets the Trinity as informing us that there are at least "three ways in which the one God is humanly thought and experienced".[35] God does not have "three centres of consciousness and will" but there are "three ways in which the one God is humanly known - as creator, as transformer, and as inner spirit".[36] This is a simple form of modalism. Hick's treatment bears no relation to Trinitarian theology and we must conclude that his analysis is simply a way of using the Trinity as illustrative material for a picture of the Divine drawn from his philosophical pluralism. This final example is more a case of complete abandonment of the doctrine of the Trinity than a concerted attempt to reduce it to a non-mythological core.

A clear pattern emerges in Hick's account of the Biblical narrative and the creeds, confessions and doctrines built upon it. If these beliefs when taken literally give rise to logical problems or to religious exclusiveness[37] then they must be reinterpreted in mythological or metaphorical categories. Logical problems cannot be admitted by the principles of universal reason and religious exclusiveness is not compatible with the principle of the universality of religion.

Kant pursues a similar hermeneutic. Particular, historical knowledge is not universally accessible and, consequently, cannot be universally necessary:

> We have noted that a church dispenses with the most important mark of truth, namely, a rightful claim to universality, when it bases itself upon a revealed faith. For such a faith, being historical .... can never be uni-

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[35] Hick 1993a p.149
[36] Hick 1993a pp.152-153
[37] Hick 1993a p.162

versally communicated so as to produce conviction.[38]

For this reason Kant also engages upon a reductive analysis of key Christian beliefs so that particular claims related to distinctive historical events or cultural circumstances can be shed of such particularity in favour of their universal truth.

Christ Our Archetype

Concerning the incarnation Kant describes Jesus as the "archetype" of moral perfection.[39] While not denying the historicity of Jesus, Kant affirms Jesus as a representation or an example of the moral standards expected of all people. As we have noted, Kant understood the archetype to be present in each one of us and so the example Jesus gave is certainly not unique and our knowledge of it not dependent on revelation.[40] Concerning the atonement, Kant interprets this doctrine as pointing to the need for God to have "a means of supplementing, out of the fullness of His own holiness, man's lack of requisite qualifications" for salvation.[41] Whatever unique significance this might suggest for the atonement is undermined by the fact that moral transformation, the human contribution to salvation, is accessible to all and pursuit of it does not require knowledge of it.

Modalism and the Trinity

Regarding the Trinity it is significant that Kant has little more to say than Hick. Where Hick describes the function of the Trinitarian 'symbol' in terms of our experience of God, Kant describes it in terms of our moral experience:

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[38] Kant 1960 p.100
[39] Kant 1960 p.54ff.
[40] cf. Kant 1960 p.56
[41] Kant 1960 p.134

> God wills to be served under three specifically different moral aspects. The naming of the different (not physically, but morally different) persons of one and the same Being expresses this not ineptly.[42]

Kant describes it as a mistake to regard the doctrine of the Trinity "as an extension of the theoretical knowledge of the divine nature" for to do so would give rise to a mystery both "incomprehensible" and "anthropomorphic" and, therefore, of no use for moral improvement.[43] The value of such symbolic language for Kant is its moral value rather than its ability to depict metaphysical reality.

The Reducibility of Religion

Both thinkers relate the function of what they take to be representational language to the moral transformation of the human life. This is the final bar at which all doctrines must be evaluated. Their analysis of language is part of a general reductionist treatment of religion which leads them both to assert no more than three metaphysical beliefs that are necessarily part of the universally valid faith.

Hebblethwaite has identified what he describes as the three residual truth-claims that remain in the wake of Hick's distinction between noumenal and phenomenal reality. It is instructive to note that these, at least in general terms, are also the residual content of Kant's universal religion.

> 1. There is an ultimate transcendent Reality, to which all human religions, in their very different modes, are historically and culturally shaped responses.
> 2. Salvific religious experience, leading to transformation from self-centredness to Reality-centredness, is not a purely human possibility. Religion, in all its different forms, involves spiritual resources from

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[42] Kant 1960 p.132
[43] Kant 1960 p.133

beyond.
3. Human life will be extended, beyond death, towards some form of perfected consummation in the end.[44]

Truth claims must remain embedded in Hick's analysis if he is to remain a critical realist. However, the realist reach and explanatory power of the remaining truth claims are clearly very limited in content. The God of religious pluralism must remain an undefined "transcendent Reality" in order to include all non-materialist or non-secular world views. Salvation means moral transformation and occurs through some form of undefinable spiritual influence. The third truth claim relates the process of moral transformation to its eschatological dimension. Each truth claim simultaneously distances Hick from secularism while favouring no particular religion.

Conclusions

As we have seen, Hick maintains that the justification for holding these beliefs rests upon the religious experience of the individual and the community to which they belong. However, it is also important to note that none of these beliefs are known through experience directly. They are, in fact, the product of theology. Theology, according to Hick is the second-order theoretical reflection upon the awareness given through religious experience.[45] Therefore, each truth claim is no more than a postulate of religious experience. This draws Hick's position sharply into line with that of Kant. Kant maintained two central postulates: the existence of God and continued personal existence beyond physical death in which the *summum bonum* will be realised. The difference between Kant and Hick is that for the latter these are postulates of religious experience whereas for the former they are postulates of

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[44] Hebblethwaite 1993 p.331
[45] Loughlin presents evidence for this distinction between first and second order discourse in the work of Hick in Loughlin 1986a pp.100ff.

practical (moral) reason. However, even this difference is muted when it is acknowledged that, for Hick, religious experience is continuous with practical reason. Having established this connection between Hick and Kant we may turn to assess the more general project of which Kant is a formative part.

Chapter 5 The Enlightenment Project

(a) The Encyclopaedist Vision

The number of significant connections we have established between the work of Hick and Kant permit us to locate them both in the same broad movement of thought. We will first examine Kant's description of the broader project he was engaged in and then consider MacIntyre's account of liberalism.[1] We will argue that Hick's pluralist theology is a modern example of the Encyclopaedist Vision and then be in a position to deploy MacIntyre's incisive analysis of liberalism against Hick.

What is Enlightenment?

Kant saw his own times as marking a radical break with the past. Most commentators date the movement known as modernism from the work of Descartes.[2] It may be more accurate to say that the seeds of modernity were sown in Descartes but that he remained a part of the late mediaeval worldview rather than truly originating something new.[3] It is with Kant that one can identify a decisive break with the past. We may begin with his demand for such a radical break:

> Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere aude*! "Have courage to use your own reason!" - that is the motto

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[1] In particular MacIntyre 1987, 1988 and 1990

[2] So Middleton and Marsh 1995 p.41, Newbigin 1989 p.28, Allen 1989 p.37, Küng 1991 p.5ff.

[3] Hence Gellner draws out the significance of the Cartesian method in which the existence of God is necessary to provide a basis for philosophy. This distances Descartes from "pure" Modernism (Gellner 1992 pp.1-22).

of enlightenment.[4]

In this call to the Enlightenment[5] Kant makes clear two key features in the movement. First, it is a break with the past. By "tutelage" Kant identifies any movement that imposes truth, meaning or ethics from without. Tutelage is the imposition of authority upon the human subject. It could be despotic in form but Kant is clear that the tutelage facing humankind as eighteenth century Prussia drew to a close was self-incurred because people wanted it that way. They wanted it that way because, just as a child who is spoilt by parents becomes lazy, humanity comes to relax into an easy way of life. Enlightenment would be the intellectual act of breaking ranks with such imposed authority. It was to be humankind's coming of age. Tutelage is the grip that tradition may hold upon those unable to think for themselves. Whether Protestant or Catholic in form Kant identified the traditions of ecclesiastical Christianity with such tutelage and called for their demise.

Second, "*Sapere aude!*" (Dare to Know!) is a claim to the supremacy of human reason. Knowledge and understanding are available to all not through the dictates of tradition but through the exercise of autonomous reason. Kant even describes the summons to the exercise of reason as a call to "go alone" in contrast to the effect of tradition on people who Kant compares to "domestic cattle" - dumb, placid and conformist.[6] The contrast is between the autonomy of the Enlightenment Man,[7] walking a lonely path to

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[4] Kant 1963 p.3

[5] Translations of Kant employ the term without the capital letter. While quotations from Kant retain this form our preferred use will be as a proper name in common with most contemporary writers and in order to distinguish the term from the more limited salvific connotations of the verbal form (i.e. as used in Hick's pluralist interpretation of religion).

[6] Kant 1963 p.3

[7] "Man" is the appropriate noun in discussing Kant's thesis. He declared all of the "fair sex" to be opposed to the Enlightenment (Kant 1963 p.3).

personal knowledge, and the cattle of tradition who are herded along in their communities believing only what they are told by others. These are the two key features of the Enlightenment; the end of tradition and the autonomy of reason.

The traditions with which Kant takes issue are religious traditions rather than traditions of art or science:

> I have placed the main point of enlightenment - the escape of men from their self-incurred tutelage - chiefly in matters of religion because our rulers have no interest in playing the guardian with respect to the arts and sciences and also because religious incompetence is not only the most harmful but also the most degrading of all.[8]

Kant perceives religion as receiving special protection from authorities, a protection not extended to art or science. Art and science are freely the subject of public debate and open to revision and reformulation wherever necessary. In contrast, religion is harmful and the main source of tutelage because it exercises a form of authority removed from public debate and closed to revision. The difference between religion and the art/science world is a matter of neutrality. Religion is simply not hospitable to neutral, autonomous reason. In the light of Kuhn's philosophy of science this is a seriously problematic position to take. Scientific discussion relies upon philosophical presuppositions of enormous importance and takes place in a context of political and financial pressures which inevitably slant what may or may not be researched and restricts the paradigms scientists may inhabit. Religion, art and science are all examples of traditions of enquiry but Kant fails to connect the disciplines together. Therefore, only religion is treated as the focus of imposed authority from which the enlightened must break free.

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[8] Kant 1963 p.9

The Encyclopaedist Vision

The Gifford lectures were instituted by a key figure in the Enlightenment. Gifford is identified as an exemplar of one version of moral enquiry in MacIntyre's own contribution to the lecture series.[9] According to MacIntyre, Gifford and his contemporaries were dominated by the:

> guiding presupposition of thought that substantive rationality is unitary, that there is a single, if perhaps complex, conception of what the standards and the achievements of rationality are, one which every educated person can without too much difficulty be brought to agree in acknowledging.[10]

This presupposition informed both the method and the goal of those involved in producing a catalogue of knowledge in the late nineteenth century: the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. The possibility of a universal understanding of human knowledge relied upon the assumption that there was one unitary rationality. Therefore, the compilation of information in science, religion, politics or morals could be undertaken in strictly objective terms such that "any attentive and honest observer, unblinded and undistracted by the prejudices of prior commitment to belief, would report the same data, the same facts."[11] Knowledge was understood in terms of progress and all the sciences had progress as "their central subject matter and conceptions of progress and of its inevitability are among their most important unifying conceptions."[12] All knowledge could be characterised in terms of a progressive accumulation of information. For Gifford, religion was a branch of

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[9] MacIntyre 1990. Concerning Hick 1989a Badham writes "Lord Gifford would have been delighted by this book. It is hard to think of any previous Gifford Lectures which more precisely fulfilled the terms of his will." (Badham 1991 p.86)
[10] MacIntyre 1990 p.14
[11] MacIntyre 1990 p.17
[12] MacIntyre 1990 p.21

scientific study and the lectures were instituted so that religion could be studied by the same canons of reason and empirical enquiry as astronomy or chemistry. The progression of enquiry toward the unity of knowledge assumed the accessibility of a comprehensive neutral criteria for rationality. The encyclopaedist ideal of presenting objective "knowledge rather than opinion"[13] gave rise to the hope that in the post-enlightenment world the "Encyclopaedia would have displaced the Bible as the canonical book .... of the culture."[14]

Behind the drive toward a comprehensive conception of knowledge and the distinction between knowledge and opinion lay the quest for neutrality in research. This becomes a key theme in MacIntyre's assessment of the Enlightenment project.[15] Philosophers of the Enlightenment, of which Kant would be an example, argued for a method which would purge rationality of its biases and prejudices. Their proposal was:

> that we first divest ourselves of allegiance to any one of the contending theories and also abstract ourselves from all those particularities of social relationship in terms of which we have been accustomed to understand our responsibilities and our interests.[16]

The virtue claimed by this method is that of gaining a universal point of view untainted by bias. The attempt had been launched to replace the authority of tradition with that of human reason. In order to do so it was necessary to describe a form of reasoning untainted by the prejudice inherent in tradition:

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[13] Encyclopaedia Britannica (9th Edition), Vol. 1, p.viii. Cited in MacIntyre 1990 p.19
[14] MacIntyre 1990 p.19
[15] Particularly in MacIntyre 1988.
[16] MacIntyre 1988 p.3

> It was a central aspiration of the Enlightenment, an aspiration the formulation of which was itself a great achievement, to provide for debate in the public realm standards and methods of rational justification by which alternative courses of action in every sphere of life could be adjudged just or unjust, rational or irrational, enlightened or unenlightened.[17]

These proposed standards would provide the key to the neutral, universal vantage point from which all religious, moral and scientific claims could be adjudicated. The use of the judicial metaphor is helpful here as it draws attention to the degree of autonomous, impartial value invested in the principle of reason. Human reason would be handed the reigns of power as arbitrating judge in place of the tutelage of tradition. The necessary rational principles were understood to underlie, in some fashion, the worldviews of all humanity and, like seams of coal, would yield themselves to careful intellectual mining. Thinkers of the Enlightenment took "cultural particularities" to be "the mere accidental clothing of reason in particular times and places"[18] under which lay the universal rationality and morality of humankind. The figures who provided, developed and published this Enlightenment quest for neutrality include Kant, Bentham, Rousseau and, of course, the editors of the Encyclopaedia.

The Advantages of Modernism

The attraction of universal impartiality is clear in matters of conflicting claims to truth or morality. Such a rationality would be able to function as an acultural court of appeal to which all humanity might appeal. Parochial claims to authority were hardly avoidable in the Greek city states or isolated European nations but, in the light of global pluralism with its diverse seats of authority, the liberalism of the Enlightenment offers two great attractions.

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[17] MacIntyre 1988 p.6
[18] MacIntyre 1988 p.6

A Universal Language

Firstly, there is the possibility of a universal discourse for expressing and deciding truth. MacIntyre describes the cosmopolitan mentality as offering:

> the confident belief that all cultural phenomena must be translucent to understanding, that all texts must be capable of being translated into the language which the adherents of modernity speak to each other.[19]

This universal language then offers the possibility for common understanding of concepts, values and beliefs. It is the cultural equivalent to the symbolic language of mathematics, enabling its practitioners to transcend cultural particularities and understand the concepts of others.

A Universal Rationality

The second attraction of liberalism is illustrated by MacIntyre with reference to Reid's argument, against Hume, that "there are certain truths evident to almost every human being".[20] The universal translatability of concepts is complemented by their universal testability. All truth claims may be submitted to a universal, formal logic the justification for which can only be offered by appeal to the empirical fact that almost every human being assents to their validity. In matters of rationality or morality the Enlightenment presupposition is that there is an agreed standard implicit in all cultures only waiting to be identified and extracted. Any exceptions to these standards result from an "unsound mind" or "unsound philosophical theory".[21] In moral matters,

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[19] MacIntyre 1988 p.327
[20] MacIntyre 1988 p.329
[21] MacIntyre 1988 p.329

deviation must be accounted for in terms of mental illness rather than the possibility that there is a genuine alternative value system to that of European Liberalism.

The anti-tradition Tradition

The Enlightenment project which "begun as an appeal to alleged principles of shared rationality against what was felt to be the tyranny of tradition"[22] has itself become a tradition. However, in its contemporary form this tradition has undergone one substantial modification. Whereas in its youth the failure to actually identify these proposed principles had been considered "a grave defect to be remedied as soon as possible"[23] this failure has turned into a cardinal value for modern liberalism. Social pluralism, far from being a mark of intellectual immaturity, is now considered to be a virtue. It allows the individual to freely choose and live by "whatever conception of the good he or she pleases".[24] Such social pluralism must be affirmed in keeping with the golden rule of tolerance. Any conception of the good may be adopted but only so long as it does not affect the conceptions of the good held by others in the same society.

The Encyclopaedist vision, as MacIntyre describes it, may be summarised in the following way. It is the project stemming from the Enlightenment to the present day which attempts to replace religious, civil or sovereign authority with human reason. It presupposes a common rationality and morality underlying all human behaviour other than deviant behaviour which is the product of illness. The method of the project depends upon the production of a tradition free language of enquiry into which all parochial languages may be translated and all *facts* disentangled from the opinions that

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[22] MacIntyre 1988 p.335
[23] MacIntyre 1988 p.335
[24] MacIntyre 1988 p.336

obscure them. The aim of the project, in common with the presupposed unitary nature of knowledge, is the systematisation of true beliefs into their one, coherent whole: the encyclopaedic presentation of knowledge. This is the aim of Kant's call to Enlightenment. In throwing off the shackles of tutelage in favour of reason one is attempting to discard the particularities of belonging to a community of enquiry with its own norms of authority in favour of a universal notion of reason.

What is a Tradition?

In order to understand MacIntyre's history of ideas and apply its findings to our present study it is necessary that we unpack exactly what he means by "tradition" and how it relates to the work of philosophy and theology.[25]

The traditions with which MacIntyre is concerned are, at least, "traditions of intellectual enquiry".[26] Intellectual enquiry is a part of "the elaboration of a mode of social and moral life"[27] as expressed in the public institutions of which that tradition is a part. Hence, MacIntyre describes traditions as homogenous communities in which human thought occurs; communities involving political structures, social arrangements and conceptions of justice. Furthermore, it is only in the context of such traditions that intellectual enquiry may occur. Traditions are not optional patterns of belief which may be assessed by other standards:

> There is no standing ground, no place for enquiry, no way to engage in the practices of advancing, evaluating, accepting, and rejecting reasoned argu-

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[25] There are a number of useful discussions of these issues in Horton and Mendus (eds.) 1994. See also McMylor 1994 pp.147-173.
[26] MacIntyre 1988 p.349
[27] MacIntyre 1988 p.349

ment apart from that which is provided by some particular tradition or other.[28]

Traditions provide the necessary standpoint for all moral and rational enquiry. It is only within such a tradition that moral and rational concepts find their meaning and suitable models of how they should be applied. Furthermore, the "data" or "facts" such as morally perplexing situations or disputed physical evidence can only be perceived in terms of a tradition. According to MacIntyre traditions "are always and ineradically so some degree local, informed by particularities of language and social and natural environment".[29] Thus, traditions are particular communities of human beings and must be understood in terms of those particularities rather than in the light of any proposed general or universal categories. An important implication of this approach is that any attempt to describe the diversity of belief must of necessity be a 'narrative' rather than a catalogue or encyclopaedia. The reason for this implication is that no general features of thought may be isolated from competing traditions in order to produce a systematic account. Instead, traditions may only be narrated in terms of their particular features. This is, in effect, the project with which MacIntyre is concerned: a narrated history of ideas.

Morality and rationality must also be understood through particular narratives. There simply is no non-tradition or a-tradition moral code or rational standard available:

> since there are a diversity of traditions of enquiry, with histories, there are, so it will turn out, rationalities rather than rationality, just as it will turn out that there are justices rather than justice.[30]

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[28] MacIntyre 1988 p.350
[29] MacIntyre 1988 p.361
[30] MacIntyre 1988 p.9

MacIntyre is arguing, *contra* Enlightenment, for a genuine pluralism of reason and morality. This means that while "rationality" and "morality" are useful categories to shape a discussion of tradition, in reality they are empty categories. There is no rationality or morality but only rationalities and moralities which are dependent upon traditions.

The essential constitution of traditions must be construed in terms of their particular determinative beliefs rather than in terms of epistemology or some other general philosophical category. In describing differences between Aristotelianism and Augustinianism, MacIntyre stresses that they "differ from each other over much more than their contending accounts of practical rationality and justice: they differ in their catalogs of the virtues, in their conceptions of selfhood, and in their metaphysical cosmologies."[31] Such differences are even more pronounced in the case of religious pluralism where conceptions of selfhood and cosmology diverge so radically.[32]

An objection to this account might be that as traditions are constantly changing and reformulating beliefs in the light of new developments they cannot be identified simply in terms of determinative beliefs.[33] In fact, if it is the case that all beliefs are

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[31] MacIntyre 1988 p.349

[32] Hick acknowledges this. Concerning the diversity of "primary affirmations" (cosmology, selfhood) he writes "They conflict in the sense that they are different and that one can only centre one's religious life wholeheartedly and unambiguously upon one of them" (Hick 1989a p.373). Hick's theoretical devices to overcome these differences include the mythological interpretation of language and the primacy of ethical categories over the intellectual.

[33] This objection is implicit in Ward 1994 pp.42-45. Though not specifically directed at MacIntyre, his suggestion that social membership may not be explicable in terms of adherence to an intellectual framework is pertinent to MacIntyre's work; "Especially in the case of religious institutions, the reality of social membership is so complex and the reasons for membership so diverse that it would be quite false to think it was a matter of intellectual assent to all the declarations of the institution." (Ward 1994

in a state of flux and open to endless possible revisions then it would be inappropriate to deem any particular beliefs 'determinate'.

This objection also relates to MacIntyre's own account of the development of a tradition. According to his account there are various crises, encounters and developments with which a tradition must deal and through which a tradition may change. There are identifiable "stages in the initial development of a tradition".[34] However, it would be wrong to suggest that a tradition could ever change out of all recognition. Such a radical change must be characterised as conversion and not development. Instead, MacIntyre notes that "Some core of shared belief, constituitive of allegiance to the tradition, has to survive every rupture."[35] The picture of traditions in constant flux without identifiable core beliefs is simply inappropriate. There are core beliefs and if allegiance to them is lost then conversion has occurred.

Hick against Tradition

Hick's work shares with Kant a commitment to a transcendent rational and moral framework for the interpretation and evaluation of religion. Hick is convinced that his epistemology can provide an analysis of religion in general, universal categories. This conviction leads him to apply an epistemology originally offered as an account for Christian belief to religious belief in general. Hick is continuing Kant's project in undermining the role of tradition specific enquiry in favour of a neutral account of religious knowledge that relies on no external authority other than a natural belief in reason and morality assumed to be held by all people.[36] It is important to note that

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pp.43-44)
[34] MacIntyre 1988 p.355
[35] MacIntyre 1988 p.356
[36] Apczynski 1992

Hick's three step epistemology gives primacy to natural/physical and moral/personal categories over the religious level of interpretation. Tradition, for Hick, belongs to the second and third steps of interpretation. In contrast, we might diagrammatically represent the implications of MacIntyre's treatment of tradition in the following way.

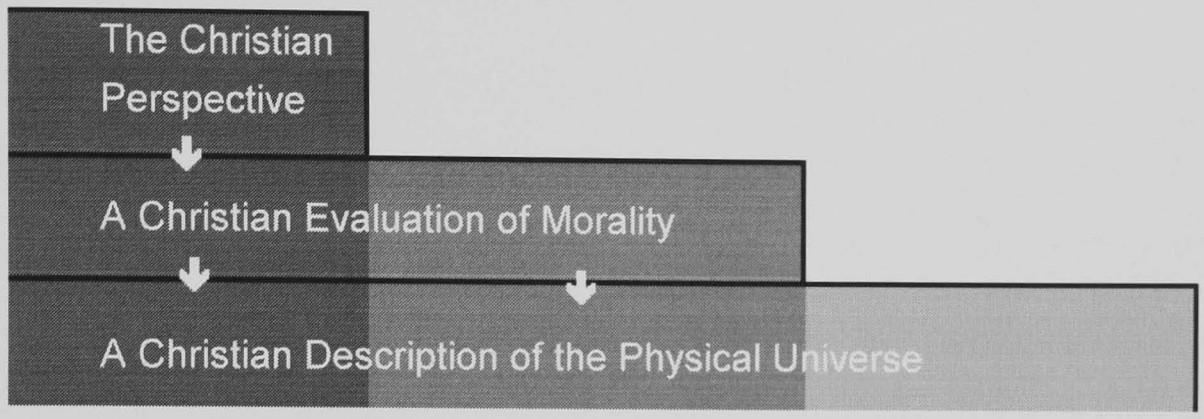

Figure 6 A Critique of Hick's Epistemology

Figure 6 demonstrates the reversal of Hick's methodology that MacIntyre's thesis implies. The religious perspective is provided by the tradition to which one belongs and this is the context in which moral and physical evaluative procedures will occur. The diagram shows a descending pattern in order to highlight the "total" perspective of a tradition within which moral and physical discourse are only subsets. It might be retorted that this alternative diagram is unhelpful because it makes a tradition, in all its complexity, already a 'given' and fails to show how anyone actually comes to believe in a tradition in the first place. This objection arises from the basic individualistic approach to knowledge inherent in the Enlightenment tradition from Kant to Hick. In contrast, MacIntyre's scheme emphasises the communal nature of knowledge. It is not individuals who are justified or not justified in their beliefs (Hick) but communities of faith (traditions) that are justified or not. We will return to assess further a

communitarian approach to religious knowledge and apologetics further below[37] but first we must clarify Hick's relationship to the Enlightenment. We shall do so in terms of his treatment of language, rationality and experience. This analysis will allow us to submit Hick's work to a range of post Enlightenment critiques.[38]

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[37] See Chapter 6 (d)

[38] Cook identifies Hick as postmodern (Cook 1993 p.10). In contrast, our thesis locates Hick in the modernist tradition and finds postmodern resources to fault his position. Hick notes the idiosyncrasy of Cook's claim (Hick 1994 p.20).

(b) Language and Rationality

It is the contention of this thesis that Hick is committed to developing an Enlightenment conception of rational justification that will provide a defence of religion in general though not of Christianity in particular. We have analysed in detail Hick's epistemology. Its essential features are empiricist, sceptic and Kantian.[1] These features entitle it to be classed as an Enlightenment project. The primary criticism of this approach concerns its poor treatment of the role of tradition in enquiry. It is tradition that provides a cultural and linguistic setting in which reason and belief find their particular meaning. Hick undermines the significance of cultural and linguistic contexts in order to produce a neutral epistemology capable of subsuming all plurality. We will now present this feature of Hick's work in relation to his treatment of language which most clearly demonstrates his location in the Enlightenment.

Definitions of Myth and Metaphor

Hick has often emphasised certain literary forms in the course of his work without devoting great space to discussing the exact sense in which he uses them.[2] It will be necessary to briefly trace Hick's conception of religious language through the corpus of his work in order to identify his position. The literary forms we shall discuss are those of myth and metaphor.[3]

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[1] These are the claims of chapters 3 and 4. It must be noted that the form of empiricism to which Hick is indebted is in its revised, post-Kantian, form. We acknowledge that there is a substantial difference between the use of empiricism he makes and that of the classical empiricists such as Locke and Hume.

[2] Perhaps it is particularly surprising that even Hick 1990a which has a chapter on religious language also fails to provide an analysis of these terms in any detail. Primarily the chapter outlines and critiques various noncognitive and symbolic accounts of religious language but Hick offers little nuance for his own description of religious language use.

[3] Hick uses these terms somewhat interchangeably.

Hick has consistently claimed, as we have seen, that religion is essentially fact-asserting in its very nature. However, not all religious truth claims can be understood as simple assertions of fact for this would give rise to profound internal contradictions within Christianity apart from the irresolvable problems for the relationship between Christianity and other religions. Hick has developed an account of religious language use that helps overcome this dilemma.

In some of his most early work Hick notes that the basic fact-asserting model of religion which he employs at this stage leaves:

> ample scope for the non-factual language of myth, symbol and poetry to express the believer's awareness of the illimitable mysteries which surround that core of religious fact.[4]

Myth, symbol and poetry are language uses that Hick clearly distinguishes from the literal language use which comprise the basic fact-asserting character of religion. Hick describes myth as non-factual but of value in forming the religious outlook on life. He describes the network of literal beliefs as containing "gaps which have to be filled, if at all, by myth".[5] Hick is here describing the areas of theological discourse more often described as mysteries. These mysteries he identifies as gaps in literal knowledge and the function of myth is to fill those gaps. The relationship of myth to literal language is one of supplement and adornment to factual language.

Hick accepts that debates will always continue concerning the exact demarcation between myth language and literal language. Though the lines may be redrawn from

[4] Hick 1988b pp.22-23
[5] Hick 1988b p.23

time to time he maintains that this basic language distinction will always remain. However, it would not be the case that all religious beliefs could be classified as myth. If all beliefs were mythological in character then they would not relate to an objective order of existence but would "merely define an imagined realm of their own" and a religion "thereby forfeits its cognitive value".[6] If an initial assumption is made that religion does not relate to an objective order of existence then the mythological account of language may be adopted but Hick describes this not as a revision of Christianity so much as an obituary for it:

> The faith embodied in the biblical writings, and the faith of the church as an extension of this, depend upon the conviction that God exists, not merely as an idea in some men's minds, but as the creator and sustainer of the universe .... [7]

According to Hick, Christian faith has always rested on the assumption that the reality of God is mind-independent or an objective fact. This empirical fact about the nature of Christianity is Hick's prime motive for retaining the core factual account of religious language. However, the description Hick provides of where a non-factual account of religion would lead helps define what he means by mythological (non-factual) language. Myths are imaginary, of noncognitive value and "merely ideas" in some people's heads.

Hick's contribution to the collection of essays he edited on Christology[8] builds upon the work of his fellow contributors to draw out the implications of the historical arguments many of them had made concerning the non-historical nature of high

[6] Hick 1988b p.24
[7] Hick 1988b p.25
[8] Hick 1977a

Christologies. Hick makes use of these claims in order to sustain his pluralist argument. However, he also devotes some space to outlining what he means by the claim that "the idea of divine incarnation is a mythological idea".[9] Hick argues that one cannot understand the incarnation to be a literal truth claim because its literal sense is illogical:

> For to say, without explanation, that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was also God is as devoid of meaning as to say that this circle drawn with a pencil on paper is also a square.[10]

By "without explanation" Hick means without spelling out what kind of language use one is adopting in terms of the canons of Enlightenment empiricism. Only when such a claim is spelled out in these terms does it constitute a literal truth claim. If any claim cannot be understood coherently as a "literal claim" it must, urges Hick, be construed as a myth:

> a myth is a story which is told but which is not literally true, or an idea or image which is applied to someone or something but which does not literally apply, but which invites a particular attitude in its hearers.[11]

Hick is not interested in the former sense of myth, which simply means a fable or story. The latter sense of myth is not necessarily narrative as it may include any idea or concept that does not merely teach or entertain but also invites a dispositional response. While the truth of a literal claim is to do with its relationship to an objective reality, the "truth of a myth is a kind of practical truth consisting in the appropriateness of the attitude to its object."[12] This definition provides a clear account of why Hick

[9] Hick 1977b p.178
[10] Hick 1977b p.178
[11] Hick 1977b p.178
[12] Hick 1977b p.178

chooses to use the term "appropriate" in this discussion. It may be said that a literal truth claim could be judged in terms of its appropriateness. In that case it would be the appropriateness of the claim to the reality about which it speaks. However, in the case of a mythological claim, the sense of appropriateness is secondary or derived. A myth is true if it evokes the appropriate attitude and consequent behaviour in the hearer or user towards something else. Hick clearly demarcates these two types of language use both of which are necessary for a religion to maintain its cognitive status. Literal truths are attempts to describe objective reality and may be tested in terms of their correspondence to that reality. Mythological truths fill the gaps left by the literal. They supplement and adorn the literal component of religion and have the function of evoking appropriate dispositional responses.

The Myth/Literal Distinction

Hick provides a more sustained treatment of the myth/literal language distinction in his later work.[13] Here he states that his definition relies upon "a distinction between literal and mythological truth".[14] He arrives at the distinction by spelling out the truth tests relevant to the respective categories. A belief is literal if the truth test that it requires "consists in its conformity or lack of conformity to fact".[15] However, myth is not literally true but "tends to evoke an appropriate dispositional attitude".[16] Hick's definition of myth does not depend on an account of a literary type but on the function and effect of its use. Myth includes story forms and also concepts within theological systems. One problem that arises here is that though Hick has intended to "fix our use of the term"[17] by an initially specific definition he now extends the term to include a

[13] Particularly Hick 1989a.
[14] Hick 1989a p.348
[15] Hick 1989a p.348
[16] Hick 1989a p.348
[17] Hick 1989a p.347

whole range of literary devices, figures of speech and theological concepts. His weakly specified definition allows him to treat both the "Hebraic story of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden" and the "idea of the transsubstantiation [*sic*] of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ" as mythologies.[18] This weak definition leads to a discussion in which metaphor, analogy, allegory, parable and even interpreted history are rolled into one under the general category of myth. An example of this is found in Hick's suggestion that he is speaking in "mythological terms" when he describes a "viciously devious" committee meeting as "the work of the devil".[19] This is clearly an example of a metaphor but because Hick's account lacks nuance he describes it as a myth. In effect, Hick's discussion leaves only two language types in operation; the literal (fact) and the non-literal (myth). All concrete examples of language use must be either one or the other.

Myth and the Literal as Universal Categories

This discussion of language use employs the leading assumptions of the Enlightenment tradition. Hick intends his definition to function as universal categories for the assimilation of all the available data from the world religions. Whether we are discussing Hinduism, Shinto or Southern Baptist Christianity, any truth claims that are not amenable to a certain type of truth testing are bound together under the term "myth". Furthermore, the type of testing Hick employs is nothing but the standards of empiricism: the evidential value of sense experience to authorise belief. In this language analysis Hick has posited a set of standards not specific to any tradition but in terms of which he is able to systematise all traditions into their literal

[18] Hick 1989a p.349
[19] Hick 1989a p.348

and non-literal components. Here is the encyclopaedist vision in its late twentieth century form.

This dualist treatment of language relies upon a radical dichotomy between myth and literal truth which in turn echoes the Kantian epistemology. Hick's definition not only emphasises the existential significance of myth as practical truth but also isolates this aspect as the exclusive function of myth. In contrast, Marshall describes the relationship between myth and truth as one that can only be settled with reference to particular cases: "To say that a story is a myth is not to pronounce on its historical truth or falsity .... A myth may or may not employ historical materials."[20] Hick defines myth in such a way that he does make a pronouncement on the historicity of mythological claims. If a claim conveyed historical truth it would not be a myth but a literal truth claim:

> in addition to literal truth there is also mythological truth. A statement or set of statements about X is mythologically true if it is not literally true but nevertheless tends to evoke an appropriate dispositional attitude to X. Thus, mythological truth is practical or .... existential.[21]

This definition does not allow the possibility of religious language that evokes appropriate dispositional attitudes *because* it is literally true. Furthermore, it excludes the possibility of other ways in which language may properly be said to refer (such as through metaphor or analogy) without in any normal sense being literal. Hick closes this avenue of discussion by isolating mythology from literalism and defining the former as strictly non-referential.[22]

[20] Marshall entry "Myth" in Ferguson 1989 p.450
[21] Hick 1989a p.348
[22] Hick's account has no place for Soskice's project of theological realism which affirms that "the models and the metaphorical terminology [of the Christian tradition]

The specific understanding of myth with which we are dealing in the case of Hick's pluralism is non-literal (being a different type of language use from the literal) and defined in terms of function (the emotive impact) rather than genre (it may be either narrative or non-narrative). We may now consider the function of myth in Hick's interpretation of doctrine and its implications for apologetic discourse.

The function of Myth

The main function of myth is as a "resource required for the discussion of religious beliefs."[23] There are certain claims made in religion about matters truly beyond our comprehension and Hick claims that it is our use of myths that enables us to speak of them. He categorises myth in terms of two types. The first are "expository myths"[24] and the second are attempts to express the inexpressible described as "mysteries".[25]

1. Expository Myths

Expository myths are attempts to express a basic truth about human existence in imaginative terms. They are optional and reducible for they "say something that can also be said non-mythologically, though generally with markedly less imaginative impact".[26] In this case, the function of a myth is ornamental. Hick is optimistic about our ability to discern the underlying purpose of such myths and to disentangle the mythological garb with loss to nothing but its imaginative impact. For example, Hick interprets the "mythic story" in the Garden of Eden as an ornamental way of informing us of "the fact that ordinary human life is lived in alienation from God and hence from

.... may nonetheless be reality depicting." (Soskice 1987 p.118)

[23] Hick 1989a p.347

[24] Hick 1989a pp.348-349

[25] Hick 1989a pp.349-353

[26] Hick 1989a p.348

one's neighbours and from the natural environment".[27] This interpretation is certainly open to criticism when offered as a substitute for the Hebraic account. Hick admits that "imaginative impact" and the images it "engraves in the imagination" are lost in such a translation but he does not acknowledge two significant problems his construal raises. Firstly, there is the problem of drastic selectivity in his 'definitive' interpretation of the Genesis story. Secondly, there is the underlying problem that Hick is guilty, on his own account, of substituting one myth for another. This latter problem is one we shall return to in our alternative account of myth further below. At this stage we note that the function of the expository myth is an optional embellishment or ornamentation of a teaching which can quite adequately be expressed non-mythologically.

2. Mystery Myths

The second type of myth deals with ultimate mysteries. This is the most useful type for maintaining the pluralist hypothesis in the face of apparent contradictions. It is offered on the basis of the Kantian epistemology already considered.[28] In essence, the epistemic framework which distinguishes between the Real as we know it and the Real *an sich* requires an account of language which recognises the limitations of word and concept to describe the unlimited nature of the Ultimate Reality:

> Thus it cannot be said to be one or many, person or thing, substance or process, good or evil, purposive or non-purposive. None of the concrete descriptions that apply within the realm of human experience can apply literally to the unexperiencable ground of that realm.[29]

[27] Hick 1989a p.349
[28] Expressed primarily in Hick 1989a pp.236-249.
[29] Hick 1989a p.246

There are two problems that Hick is responding to. These are the limitations of language as a vehicle for describing Ultimate Reality and the limitations of cognition in attempting to conceive what that reality could be. In handling these problems Hick is keen to preserve a realist interpretation of religious language. Regarding meaning he does so through the verification principle. Regarding the cognitive nature of religious experience he can only do so in terms of postulation. The basic postulate is "the Real as the ground" of "religious phenomena".[30] This postulate affirms the cognitive nature of fundamental religious beliefs such as the existence of the Ultimate Real. Attempts to describe the postulate are mythological; "None of the descriptive terms that apply within the realm of human experience can apply literally to the unexperiencable reality that underlies that realm."[31] Mythological language may be expressed in either literal or analogical pictures but, argues Hick, neither apply to the Ultimate Real in itself. Literal myth descriptions are those which apply to divine activity within the realm of space and time such as the Lord bringing his people out of Egypt. Analogical myth descriptions are those which attempt to describe the Ultimate Real in its very nature such as God is wise or Brahman is *satchitananda*. However, the differences between literal and analogical myth language remain internal to the broader definition of myth with which Hick works. Whatever type of myth is being employed it bears only an indirect relation to the Real:

> And as such it functions mythologically: we speak mythologically about the noumenal Real by speaking literally or analogically about its phenomenal manifestations.[32]

[30] Hick 1989a p.350
[31] Hick 1989a p.350
[32] Hick 1989a p.351

Hick's definition of myth becomes ever more encompassing as he extends its range of usage. Not only does myth include stories, concepts and metaphors but here it extends its range to include literal and analogical language use. Myth is understood neither in terms of literary genre nor what believers think they mean by their choice of language. Rather, myth is distinguished from literal language by Hick's distinction between the Real as it is in itself and the Real as it is perceived. Consequently, most religious language use is mythological in character despite protestations from believers that they intend their language use to be literal, analogical or metaphorical.

The De-Mythologisation of Religion

Myth becomes an all-encompassing hermeneutical device for Hick. Through its use he is able to reinterpret the language use of all religions in terms of a neutral standard of enquiry. We may summarise his definition of myth in the following way.

Myths do not carry the direct relationship to the Real that purely formal literal claims do. Myths relate to human religious experience rather than to the Real itself. The core content of a myth may be isolated in terms of its function in the believers life but not in terms of its validity in describing or disclosing reality. All types of myth serve to guide our response to the Real by evoking in us the appropriate behaviour. The "expository" type is simply the embellishment of a statement concerning human existence and is reducible to that statement with loss only to its emotive impact. The second type of myth attempts to describe the Ultimate Real directly and cannot be reduced to something else because they are identical to their emotive impact. To lose the emotive impact of "God is wise" is to lose its very meaning. In fact, when the expository myth is de-mythologised it becomes a myth of the second sort. For example, Hick classifies the doctrine of transubstantiation as an expository myth which "can be seen as a mythological way of making the communicant's reception of

[the elements] an occasion of special openness to God as known through Christ".[33] However, such phrases as "God as known through Christ" or even "openness to God" fail, in Hick's account, to constitute literal claims. Such phrases describe the believers' experience of and response to phenomenal manifestations of the Real and are identifiable with their emotive impact. Therefore, this example of myth is also one of Hick's second type. Considered in terms of function the two-fold distinction of myth outlined above is not significant.

Myth as a Basis for Pluralism

In order to sustain the pluralist hypothesis it is imperative that Hick relativise the various doctrinal claims of the world religions. He does so by re-framing the primary purpose of religious language use. Hick claims that religious language use is not primarily concerned with postulating metaphysical descriptions of supernatural reality but with inspiring certain forms of behaviour. Therefore, religions are not to be compared in terms of doctrinal content but in terms of the kind of behaviour those doctrines inspire:

> Thus the eastern and western paths constitute different forms of self-transcendence in response to the Real and it may well be that their differing eschatological mythologies serve the same soteriological function.[34]

Hick's argument finds evidential support in the apparent similarities among the religions in the type of moral 'fruits' they tend to produce. Characteristics of the great religious saints are shared by them all even those who belong to very different

[33] Hick 1989a p.349
[34] Hick 1989a p.356

religious traditions.[35] Hick is able to make this connection because his use of myth enables him to relativise the literal significance of truth claims in favour of their functional value.

Hick does not think that there are many "absolutely pure" examples of incompatible truth claims because most rival claims can be understood in terms of "historical nuances" and as "marginal exceptions".[36] However, he concedes that, broadly speaking, there are many examples of apparent doctrinal contradictions among the world religions. These are doctrines that could not be rationally held simultaneously by the same individual. The belief in the personal nature of God is in opposition to the impersonal Nirvana of Buddhism and cannot simply be reconciled. Disagreements like these are classified by Hick in three types.[37] Firstly, there are divergent views about historical facts. Secondly, there are disagreements over trans-historical ideas. Thirdly, there are stories or pictures which attempt to disclose some kind of information about the Ultimate Real.

In each of these cases Hick establishes a pragmatic criterion for truth and resolution of conflicting truth claims. For the first type of disagreement, appeal must be made to "unbiased assessment of the evidence".[38] Such a resolution is only possible in principle. The demand for unbiased evidence is, in most important cases, impossible to meet. Hick is concerned to maintain that in such matters of doctrinal dispute one must have an open-minded attitude as to their truth or falsehood. This is a

[35] This is the thesis of Hick 1989a pp.299-314
[36] Hick 1989a p.363
[37] Hick 1989a p.363
[38] Hick 1989a p.364

consequence of his Scepticism. Given that absolute truth is inaccessible it would be wrong to be too dogmatic over historical matters.

Trans-historical truth claims concern metaphysical questions which can only be answered in principle and for which we lack the necessary data. Examples include what actually took place in the creation of the universe. Hick argues that beliefs about this process are only speculative and cannot contribute to the process of salvation/liberation:

> Thus not only do we not know whether the universe is eternal, but this ignorance does not constitute a bar to attainment of liberation; and, further, to treat it as though it were soteriologically essential would only be likely to hinder the salvific process.[39]

Hick envisages the primary goal of religion as the transformation of human consciousness from self-centredness to Reality-centredness or from selfishness to selflessness and, consequently, "the basic criterion .... for judging religious phenomena is soteriological."[40] Trans-historical claims may be construed as myths because their significance is not in the disclosure of metaphysical information about the universe but in their influence on moral dispositions. They are to be tested according to their soteriological affect rather than their literal correspondence to reality.[41] All the central doctrines of Christianity, including the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection and the Trinity, Hick describes as "possible candidates for mythological interpretation".[42]

[39] Hick 1989a p.367
[40] Hick 1989a p.309
[41] Hick 1989a p.370
[42] Hick 1989a p.370

The interpretation of religious doctrines as myths permits a possible resolution of the problem of conflicting truth claims. Hick's definition of myth enables such claims to be interpreted in terms of their soteriological effectiveness and also give due consideration to their culturally conditioned form:

> Thus the pluralist hypothesis suggests that a number of trans-historical beliefs, which are at present unverifiable and unfalsifiable, may well be true or false myths rather than true or false factual assertions.[43]

In particular Hick subjects the doctrine of the incarnation to this interpretation. It is the incarnation perhaps above all that provides a Christian example of a truth claim that is rooted in geographical and historical matters but is radically incompatible with any of the alternative world religions. The traditional doctrine, interpreted literally, has caused Christians to assume a unique privilege in relation to the rest of the world. This drives Hick to strip the doctrine of its mythological garb and declare the following literal core:

> as indicating an extraordinary openness to the divine presence in virtue of which Jesus' life and teachings have mediated the reality and love of God to millions of people in successive centuries.[44]

This construal of the doctrine clearly emphasises its effects or function in history rather than any ontological significance it might have. The resulting de-mythologised statement is compatible with most rival claims and loses connection with its actual history.

Myth and Apologetics

[43] Hick 1989a p.371
[44] Hick 1989a p.372

In apologetic endeavour Hick focuses not on the particularity of tradition but upon the generality of religion. Hick offers his account as an attempt to defend religion against naturalism without privileging any particular tradition. There are two strands to his apologetic. The first is the role of religious experience and the second is the transforming power of religious belief. Neither depend for specification on any particular tradition. Religious experience is explicable in terms of his neutral epistemology and any distinctive religious beliefs are filtered through his notion of myth. Both his epistemology and his philosophy of language are examples of the continuing project of the Enlightenment to systematise knowledge in terms of neutral rational and linguistic factors. Before we re-evaluate myth and metaphor we will consider a further element of Enlightenment methodology that has shaped Hick's foundationalism.

(c) Experiential Expressivism

Hick's basic apologetic for religious faith is the self-authenticating nature of religious experience. For this reason epistemology becomes the primary interpretative tool for religion. Within his epistemological account it is religious experience that offers access to the religious world view and provides the foundations for all subsequent (and secondary) doctrinal truth claims. Experience has a prior place to doctrine as the interpretative key to religion. This prioritising will now be the focus of our discussion.

Lindbeck's major work on doctrine arises from his own "dissatisfaction with the usual ways of thinking about those norms of communal belief .... generally spoken of as the doctrine or dogmas of the churches."[1] The problems of ecumenical discussion focus on the disagreements over doctrinal matters. Doctrines split the Christian Church and, of course, its relationship with the world religions. Lindbeck contends that a theory of doctrine is interdependent with a theory of religion and the aim of his book is to present a fresh theory of religion, using insights gained in non-theological fields, which will make clear this relationship.

1. The Cognitive-Propositional Model

Lindbeck gives short treatment to this first of the two models he describes as the traditional approaches to the nature of doctrine. It is a model that Hick also rejects in his account of Catholic Propositionalism. This model:

[1] Lindbeck 1984 p.7. This dissatisfaction marks Lindbeck's work such as in Lindbeck 1967 and 1996.

> emphasises the cognitive aspects of religion and stresses the ways in which church doctrines function as informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities.[2]

Religion is then categorised as a philosophy or science. The ideas of religion can be analysed as a set of truth claims that picture objective reality. On the basis of this model, the aim of religious dialogue is to compare truth claims and test which best corresponds to reality.[3] The issue of truth is the issue of which claims correspond best to an independent reality about which they speak:

> the primary question when comparing religions in the classically cognitivist approach of traditional orthodoxy is the question as to which faith makes the most significant veridical truth claims and the fewest false ones.[4]

Lindbeck describes the cognitive-propositional approach as the accepted orthodoxy. The traditional debates concerning orthodoxy and heresy have been understood to concern the nature of reality and the resolutions of such debates as statements with ontological truth value.

Lindbeck dismisses this theory with little comment. He scorns the approach as belonging mostly to people who "combine unusual insecurity with naiveté".[5] Despite this weak *ad hominem* argument Lindbeck concedes that the model has in fact been held by many of the most orthodox believers for much of Christian history. This makes his scant treatment of the position all the more surprising as, of course, his chief aim is to facilitate dialogue among believers and by excluding the majority by

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[2] Lindbeck 1984 p.16
[3] Representatives of this approach would include Christian 1972 and 1993, Anderson 1984 and Netland 1991.
[4] Lindbeck 1984 p.47
[5] Lindbeck 1984 p.21

his own admission he has seriously undermined any alternative offering he may propose.

It seems that the substantial problem with propositionalism that Lindbeck has identified is the treatment of religion as a unified category alongside and similar to science and philosophy. The assumption of the approach is that religious truth claims are competing attempts to describe the common ontological reality which they all revolve around. Whether the person engaged in dialogue is a Muslim from Saudi Arabia or a Christian from California their conflicting claims about the nature of God really are disagreements about the same *thing*; as if Allah and Yahweh were no more than different words with a common definition. The same criticisms could be brought to bear in relation to doctrines of salvation, human nature and eschatology. This substantial criticism follows the same trajectory as MacIntyre's critique of the Enlightenment: the model fails to give due consideration to the role of tradition in forming our perception, rationality and language. However, for all the validity of this objection it does not constitute sound reasons for abandoning entirely the cognitive-propositional model. The reason Lindbeck will not countenance this model of doctrine is that it he does not take it to be compatible with his own cultural-linguistic account which does not grant truth status to individual doctrines but only to the tradition as a whole of which they form a part.[6] However, we shall have reason to note that this distinction between the cognitive-propositional and the cultural-linguistic models has caused confusion that has not helped Lindbeck's case.[7]

2. Experiential Expressivism

[6] Lindbeck 1984 pp.63-69
[7] Chapter 5 (d)

The second mainstream category of religious theory is the experiential-expressivist account. According to Lindbeck this has become the dominant liberal model for the interpretation of religion. The assumption of this approach is that "the scholarly study of religious phenomena on the whole supports the crucial affirmations of the basic unity of religious experience."[8] Religious experience becomes the key for the interpretation of the wide variety of beliefs and practices both within the Church and in relation to religious pluralism. The need for such a key came in the wake of Kant's devastating account of religion. Kant achieved the "reduction of God to a transcendental condition of morality".[9] Lindbeck ascribes the classical experiential-expressivist position to the attempt by Schleiermacher to restate religion by developing Kant's insights further. The result was a theory of religion that emphasised experience as the core of religious belief.[10] This account was markedly different from that of the propositionalists. Doctrines were no longer to be assessed only in terms of ontology. Instead, doctrines had to be directly related to the experience of the individual subject.

Assessment of Experiential-Expressivism

There are a range of obvious attractions and advantages in the experiential-expressive model for the ecumenical movement and for inter-faith dialogue:

> Such models are particularly well fitted to supply a rationale for the inter-religious dialogue and co-operation that is so urgently needed in a divided yet shrinking world.[11]

[8] Lindbeck 1984 p.32
[9] Lindbeck 1984 p.21
[10] Schleiermacher 1960 pp.131-141
[11] Lindbeck 1984 p.23

The success of this approach to doctrine in modern times is due to its power in resolving or, at least, marginalising, contradictory beliefs. Incompatible statements which conflict under the cognitive propositional approach are subjected to a significant reformulation. Experiential-expressivism interprets doctrines in terms of symbols that express deeper common religious experience. This model underlies the theologies of religious pluralism:

> The rationale suggested, though not necessitated, by an experiential-expressive approach is that the various religions are diverse symbolisations of one and the same core experience of the Ultimate, and that therefore they must respect each other, learn from each other, and reciprocally enrich each other.[12]

Though Lindbeck engages directly with the work of Rahner, Hick provides a clear example of the expressivist approach. Though Rahner and Hick develop entirely different theological accounts of pluralism they do share a common heritage in the work of Schleiermacher. This common thread roots them both in the post-Enlightenment tradition and, with it, to the experiential-expressivist model.[13] Expressivism places emphasis on religious universals and attempts to isolate the common denominators of religious doctrines. Lindbeck gives this model his most sustained critique and we may analyse it in terms of the problems raised for Hick's position.

One problem with the method of arriving at a pluralist theology is that it sets out to prove by empirical observation a conclusion that must already be assumed in its

[12] Lindbeck 1984 p.23

[13] To be precise Lindbeck characterises Rahner as a representative of a hybrid category rather than mainstream experiential-expressivism. Hick needs no such qualification to locate his position.

methodology. Writing of Heiler and his claim that common ideas such as righteousness, mercy, repentance and prayer are evidence of the single source underlying the world religions, Lindbeck comments: ".... if one wants to find similarities in the world's major religions, *and* if one looks at them through Christian eyes, then this is a defensible list of the elements they have in common."[14] However, as Lindbeck points out, if a Buddhist were to embark on a similar investigation then he or she may draw up a very different list of common elements and Christianity may sound rather like Buddhism. The attempt to state in propositional terms what the common core actually is leads to a fundamental difficulty:

> Because this core experience is said to be common to a wide diversity of religions, it is difficult or impossible to specify its distinctive features, and yet unless this is done, the assertion of commonality becomes logically and empirically vacuous.[15]

Lindbeck argues that Rahner makes this mistake by assuming the existence of a common experience. It is impossible to show how this can be the case because any attempt to specify the experience must be in such general categories that it lacks any informative definition. The evidence itself is interpreted by this neutral category rather than supporting it and hence the conclusion of expressivism is assumed in its methodology rather than arising from it.

An even stronger objection to expressivism concerns the relationship of individual experience to the doctrines of the community. The cognitive model emphasised the truth of religious belief in terms of the correspondence of statement to reality. This is not the definition of truth used by experiential-expressivists for whom " 'truth' is a

[14] Lindbeck 1984 p.41
[15] Lindbeck 1984 p.32

function of symbolic efficacy".[16] Religious beliefs are to be compared in terms of how well they express the inner experience of believers rather than their superficial descriptive content. This strategy underlies Hick's pluralism. For Hick, the test of many central religious truth claims does not lie in a test of correspondence but "in the appropriateness to the myth's referent of the behavioural dispositions it tends to evoke in the hearer".[17] This mythological understanding of beliefs interprets them in terms of experience not ontology. The variety of religious beliefs and doctrines are only different ways of expressing the same core experience:

> When we speak of a personal God, with moral attributes and purposes, or when we speak of the non-personal Absolute, Brahman, or of the Dharmakaya, we are speaking of the Real as humanly experienced: that is, as phenomena.[18]

This pluralist account of religious belief makes belief a product of human experience and illustrates the fallacy which Lindbeck identifies.[19] Experiential-expressivism assumes that religious experience underlies and informs religious belief and its formulation as doctrinal statements and creeds. Lindbeck's alternative model reverses this relationship and conceives religion to be a "linguistic framework" that "shapes the entirety of life and thought".[20] The mistake of experiential-expressivism lies in the illusory attempt to "locate ultimately significant contact with whatever is finally important to religion in the prereflective experiential depths of the self".[21] The

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[16] Lindbeck 1984 p.47
[17] Hick 1989a p.348
[18] Hick 1989a p.246
[19] Hick's position is a qualified expressivism: he accepts the realist cognitive account of religion insofar as he would posit an objective reality as the object of religious devotion. However, our only contact with that presupposed objective reality is mediated through the common core experience.
[20] Lindbeck 1984 p.33
[21] Lindbeck 1984 p.21

articulation of these experiences are then understood to be objective symbols for inner experiences. This definition is similar to Hick's use of myth to categorise certain forms of doctrine. Lindbeck calls into question, as Wittgenstein had done with more general language use, this Kantian "turn to the subject".[22] The turn to the subject is the hallmark of the Enlightenment intellectual movement and the reason for the development of epistemology as the foundational theory for knowledge and the key to all intellectual problems.

In certain accounts of experiential-expressivism the attempt was made to maintain the superiority of Christianity over non-Christian religion.[23] Lindbeck argues that this is inconsistent. Expressivism leads inexorably to some form of philosophical pluralism:

> When religions are thought of as expressively rather than propositionally true, this possibility of complementarity and mutual enrichment is increased, but it also becomes hard to attach any definite meaning to the notion of 'unsurpassably true'.[24]

The possibility of 'mutual enrichment' is strongest in this model because it presupposes the existence of a common core of experience. The different world religions are different symbolic accounts of the same objective reality. However, Lindbeck demonstrates that if one accepts this model then it becomes untenable to maintain that Christianity is "unsurpassably true". Knowledge of the divine is, according to this model, a matter of *degree* among the people of the world not a matter of *kind*. Some may have a greater *degree* of religious knowledge than others but it is inappropriate to speak of anyone having knowledge of a different *kind*. This implies

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[22] cited in Lindbeck 1984 p.21
[23] One thinks of Rahner and Schleiermacher but not Hick.
[24] Lindbeck 1984 p.49

that there can be no qualitative difference between Christianity and other religions. The most that might be claimed is that Christianity currently holds a greater degree of knowledge and that this is a provisional status. Having dropped the cognitive propositional case for there being a quantity of information available of which Christianity could possibly have the most important, the expressivist can only claim a quality of experiential knowledge which, as a matter of degree, is never exhaustive. Expressivism has no resources to maintain the uniqueness of Christianity. Hick does not proceed in this direction, preferring to remain uncertain which religion may hold the greatest degree of religious knowledge and affirming that so far as we can tell all major religions are in a roughly equal state.[25]

A further failing of expressivism is its implicit antidoctrinalism. It is true that because so many conflicting truth claims are held even within the community of those claiming allegiance to Christ the modern mood is to take none of them seriously. Expressivism gives theoretical articulation to this mood. Instead of doctrines conveying crucial ontological truth they are "experienced as expressions of personal preference".[26] Some people prefer Buddhism while there are others who prefer Christianity. This view of doctrine leads to "religious privatism" and the consignment of historic doctrines held for hundreds of years "to the junk pile of outgrown superstitions".[27] During the sixties this led to the secularisation of Christianity and its death of God theology. Since then the process has, ostensibly at least, reversed its direction and become more syncretistic than reductionist. Yet the same underlying model of religion is at work throughout these movements. Along with his incisive analysis of the logical outcome from expressivism Lindbeck highlights a major inconsistency

[25] Part of the argument in Hick "On Grading Religions" in Badham 1990
[26] Lindbeck 1984 p.77
[27] Lindbeck 1984 p.77

with such antidoctrinalism. This inconsistency arises because doctrines are indispensable for the identity and coherence of any community:

> the 'creedless Christianity' professed by a number of groups .... is not genuinely creedless. When creedlessness is insisted on as a mark of group identity, it becomes by definition operationally creedal.[28]

Such an inconsistency is obvious in Hick's pluralist framework which, on the one hand, denies the creedal status of key religious doctrines, preferring to demythologise them and, on the other hand, affirms its own status as non-mythological. The formal claims regarding the Real, eschatology and human purpose along with the procedural claims regarding the limitations of knowledge and the true status of doctrines all form the pluralist creed.

According to Hick not only does experience justify belief it also structures belief. This fact is not always clear in Hick's work because it suggests a tension in his epistemology. For example, in a brief summary of the pluralist hypothesis Hick claims:

> Experience of the transcendent is structured either by the concept of deity, which presides over the theistic traditions, or by the concept of the absolute, which presides over the non-theistic traditions.[29]

This suggests that Hick is not subscribing to a form of expressivism: here, experience is structured by something else. That something else, being a "concept of deity" or "of the absolute", must be doctrine. However, this apparent prioritising of doctrine over experience must be evaluated in the light of what is his over-arching epistemology.

[28] Lindbeck 1984 p.74
[29] Hick 1989a p.14

For example, he describes the two main doctrines of the Real as its personal or non-personal status. Such doctrines clearly shape one's experience of the Real. However. the very fact that we can state the doctrine-experience relationship in this way shows that doctrines themselves arise from the total network of experience:

> But when human beings relate themselves to [the Real] in the mode of I-Thou encounter they experience it as personal .... When human beings relate themselves to the Real in the mode of non-personal awareness they experience it as non-personal[30]

Hick here describes two modes of "awareness" or two kinds of experience through which people interpret the Real. These are not doctrines structuring experience but lower level experience (prereligious) structuring higher level experience (religious) as part of the total package of experience that the religious interpretation of the universe is understood by Hick to be. Doctrinal statements are derived from these.

Conclusions

Because Hick endorses expressivism it is also fair to note the creedless form of Christianity that he champions. However, as Lindbeck points out, such creedlessness itself is nothing but a creed. This result is inevitable if Hick is to maintain both that particular religions are realist in epistemic intent and that his general pluralist interpretation is a description of the true status of humankind's religious knowledge. This incoherence Lindbeck identifies in antidoctrinalism is structurally the same problem as MacIntyre identifies with the liberal project of abandoning tradition while forming a tradition of its own. This inner incoherence lies unresolved at the heart of Hick's thesis. Furthermore, Hick's disjunction of language between various polarities (myth and literal, poetic and formal, descriptive and evaluative) suggest that he is

[30] Hick 1989a p.245

working with seriously limited categories for the interpretation of language. In the final section of this chapter we will outline a range of post Enlightenment objections to the kind of language analysis Hick is engaged in.

(d) Metaphor and Reality

We have now seen that Hick develops a pattern for the justification of religious belief and the interpretation of religious language in terms of the underlying religious experience of the believer. It is pre-theoretical experience that gives rise to faith and doctrine. Lindbeck construes this expressivist approach as essentially a part of the Enlightenment tradition stemming from Kant. Hick's epistemology and subsequent pluralist hypothesis are firmly embedded in the Kantian tradition of philosophical theology. In the light of the critical work of both MacIntyre and Lindbeck we are able to place Hick's apologetic for Christianity in the Enlightenment school with its themes of neutral criteria, the systemisation of knowledge, the priority of epistemology and its sceptic roots. The failure of the Enlightenment is reflected in the poverty of Hick's philosophical position. We shall now begin offering a constructive proposal for Christian apologetics based upon the alternatives offered by some critics of Enlightenment thought. In this section we will reconsider Hick's treatment of metaphor and religious language. It will be shown that the Enlightenment tradition failed to treat the context dependent nature of language and rationality adequately and this led inevitably to the reductionist account of religious language so central to Hick's work.

The Cultural-Linguistic Model

Lindbeck's alternative proposal considers religion in terms of its "cultural and/or linguistic framework" and it is this framework, rather than religious experience, that "shapes the entirety of life".[1] For this reason doctrine is given a prior place to experience in understanding how a religion works:

[1] Lindbeck 1984 p.33

> Like a culture or language, it is a common phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being a manifestation of those subjectivities.[2]

By this reversal of the relationship between inner experience and religious belief Lindbeck overcomes certain failings of expressivism. According to this model it is the stories, myths and liturgies of a community that will shape and evoke the experience of its members. This differs from either of the previous models. The feature that distances it from experiential-expressivism is that "instead of deriving external features of a religion from inner experience, it is the inner experiences which are viewed as derivative."[3] Lindbeck's model also differs from the cognitivist theory because it provides a basis for a variety of types of religious truth claims "only one of which is the formulation of statements about reality."[4] Symbols may function in a number of ways and reality-depiction is not the only valid function. The theologian must assess the function of each religious belief case by case rather than assuming them all to be attempts at reality-depiction.

There is a significant implication of Lindbeck's account for religious pluralism. The cultural-linguistic approach undermines the possibility of any common core experience underlying the diverse conceptual schemes of the world religions:

> There can be no experiential core because, so the argument goes, the experience that religions evoke and mould are as varied as the interpretative schemes they embody. Adherents of different religions do not diversely thematize the same experience; rather they have different experiences.[5]

[2] Lindbeck 1984 p.33
[3] Lindbeck 1984 p.34
[4] Lindbeck 1984 p.35
[5] Lindbeck 1984 p.40

Lindbeck's proposal underlines the need to take seriously religious doctrines, scriptures, histories and liturgies in inter-religious dialogue and understanding. They provide the only possible access to the claimed religious experience of believers. It is doctrine, not experience, that discloses the identity and self-definition of a religious community. Lindbeck does not offer this analysis to curtail dialogue but to invest that encounter with real meaning. The starting point for encounter between adherents of different religions will be the comparison of what they actually claim and not a theoretical perspective that will already systematise all apparent rivals into one coherent narrative:

> They can regard themselves as simply different and can proceed to explore their agreements and disagreements without necessarily engaging in the invidious comparisons that the assumption of a common experiential core make so tempting.[6]

The comparison of religious beliefs is often misleading because what is often identified "is not a common quality, but a set of family resemblances".[7] The reason this mistaken identification is made is that a false expressivist assumption has been made that, whatever may be claimed by believers themselves, they share a common experience. Lindbeck's model is clearly better able to account for the empirical reality of conflicting truth claims than expressivism. Also, contra cognitivism, Lindbeck points out that this model does not demand that one assumes the superiority of one's own tradition over all others.

[6] Lindbeck 1984 p.55. The characteristics of a postliberal approach to dialogue are discussed in DiNoia 1990b and to apologetics in Kamitsuka 1996.
[7] Lindbeck 1984 p.49

The significance of doctrine in this framework is its regulative function. The first order discourse of believers is the discourse of prayer, hymn and tradition (worship). The work of theologians is to formulate second order religious language use; particularly doctrinal claims. Doctrines explain, analyse and regulate the diverse first-intentional or first order uses of religious language. Doctrines function as the grammar of religious language:

> Just as grammar by itself affirms nothing either true or false regarding the world in which language is used, but only about language, so theology and doctrine, to the extent that they are second-order activities, assert nothing either true or false about God and his relation to creatures, but only speak about such assertions.[8]

This analysis leads Lindbeck to dispense with the truth testing of doctrine in terms of correspondence with the supposed common ontological referent: reality. Doctrine can only be tested in terms of their internal coherence within the wider framework of religion in which they were formulated. Lindbeck points out that this wider framework is more than just further statements of belief but also the coherence of doctrines with the whole life and discipleship of the religion in question.[9] Lindbeck does not seem to deny the epistemologically realist thrust of a religion as a whole nor the ontological significance of certain beliefs. However, specific doctrines cannot be isolated from that religion and made the objects of correspondence truth testing. Lindbeck describes the proper way to test a doctrine as to take it as part of a "gigantic proposition".[10] The Christian doctrine of the Trinity cannot be tested by standards of empiricism or Aristotelian logic alone. It can only be tested as part of a gigantic

[8] Lindbeck 1984 p.69
[9] Lindbeck 1984 p.64
[10] Lindbeck 1984 p.51

proposition, the Christian tradition, including Christology, pneumatology, doctrine of revelation, language, ontology and so forth.

When some doctrines are isolated from the 'gigantic proposition' of which they are a part they can give the misleading impression that they are doctrines common to many religions. For example, Lindbeck concedes that "all religions recommend something which can be called 'love' " but points out that this "is a banality as uninteresting as the fact that all languages are (or were) spoken."[11] Concepts, doctrines, ethics and so on are not to be taken in isolation from their tradition-specific contexts; "The significant things, are the distinctive patterns of story, belief, ritual, and behaviour that give 'love' and 'God' their specific and sometimes contradictory meanings."[12] This claim goes to the heart of the problem of defining justification in terms of epistemology. Epistemology is an attempt to define beliefs apart from the narrative setting in which they are found. This is notable in Hick's treatment of faith. Faith is a neutral category of experience accessible to all people everywhere and only expressed in doctrinal form as a second-order discipline. In contrast, Lindbeck points out that the very meaning of faith and its objects are disclosed through narratives, or patterns, that give such words their significance. In a conscious echo of Kuhn's discussion of paradigm shifts in science, Lindbeck notes the way that beliefs change within religious traditions:

> Religious traditions are not transformed, abandoned, or replaced because of an upwelling of new or different ways of feeling about the self, world or God, but because a religious interpretative scheme develops anomalies in its application in new contexts.[13]

[11] Lindbeck 1984 p.42
[12] Lindbeck 1984 p.42
[13] Lindbeck 1984 p.39

It is true that Lindbeck is not entirely clear in what distinguishes "new contexts" from new feelings. However, it is clear that he identifies the communal sense in which anomalies are encountered. A hallmark of Enlightenment expressivism as exemplified by Hick is the privatised version of religion it promotes. Anomalies arise within personal experience which, in turn, demand modifications in doctrine. In contrast, Lindbeck draws attention to the communitarian context in which anomalies occur and are resolved.

The relationship between hearing and conversion is a direct implication of the connection Lindbeck makes between language and experience. He is concerned to make a clear connection between the content of the gospel message and conversion:

> The communication of the gospel is not a form of psycho-therapy, but rather the offer and the act of sharing one's own beloved language - the language that speaks of Jesus Christ - with all those who are interested[14]

Thus becoming a Christian is inseparable from learning to use a new language and understanding the meaning of new stories. However, Lindbeck distances this position from intellectualism. He does not mean that only the literate, sophisticated intelligentsia are candidates for salvation. Rather, he is asserting that becoming a Christian involves the process or transition into a new system of symbols and vocabulary in which new experiences and behaviour are made possible. It is interesting to note that if the cultural linguistic model appears to privilege a group, the experiential-expressivist model does so too. While some form of language use is necessary to become a Christian according to Lindbeck, according to expressivism some kind of religious experience is necessary. As a matter of fact, language use is

[14] Lindbeck 1984 p.61

common to human communities whereas a particular form of religious experience does not seem to have such universality.[15]

An Analysis of Hick's Philosophy of Language

We are now in a position to analyse Hick's treatment of myth and religious experience. Hick is concerned to argue that there are two types of religious language: the literal and the non-literal. The key feature of non-literal religious language is that it arises from religious experience and is designed to evoke right dispositions toward Ultimate Reality. Hick then assigns most tradition specific beliefs to the non-literal category. This permits him to deny that apparent conflicting truth claims undermine his pluralist hypothesis. Our concern here will be to demonstrate the great limitations in Hick's approach to religious language already noted in the previous section and the way in which this naturally arises from expressivism.[16] We shall see that the main error in Hick's work on language is the basic error of the Enlightenment tradition: language looses its moorings in any particular context to float freely but empty of meaning. Furthermore, it will be noted that Hick's case for myth and metaphor undermine his attempt to provide a basis for a realist epistemology.

The History of Metaphor

Historical treatments of metaphor are instructive at this point. As we have seen, Hick includes metaphor as a use of language open to demythologisation. The metaphorical device is itself optional because the content "can also be said non-mythologically"[17]

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[15] Hick seems to concede this in his concentration upon mystics and "great saints" as his examples (cf. Hick 1989 pp.300-309)
[16] Gillis 1989 provides a lengthy critique of Hick's "unnuanced" approach to religious language.
[17] Hick 1989a p.348

without loss of meaning. This point has been the subject of great debate in literary studies and some strands of that debate will shed light on our present enquiry.[18]

Hawkes identifies two fundamental views of metaphor that underlie the history of these discussions. The first is the classical view that finds its roots in the philosophy of Aristotle. Metaphor was understood to be "one of the means of giving decorous 'effect' to speech".[19] It was then treated as an expendable ornamentation to language by most writers until the Eighteenth century. Hawkes identifies the Romantic movement in literature as a turning point in the understanding of how metaphor works. Partly in reaction to the Aristotelian view Romanticism, inspired by Platonic thought, considered metaphor to have an "organic" relationship to language.[20] Metaphor was both indispensable and irreducible.

Soskice uses a similar categorisation of metaphor. She classes the classical account of metaphor as substitutionary.[21] The substitutionary account treats metaphor in terms of its ornamental function:

> Metaphor has the virtue of clothing tired literal expression in attractive new garb, of alleviating boredom, and, as Aquinas says, of being accessible to the uneducated.[22]

The essential meaning of a metaphor can be expressed in non-metaphorical terms without loss to its significance. Indeed, non-metaphorical literal expressions are given

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[18] Hick fails to refer to this debate in any detail reinforcing the impression that his argument lacks weight (i.e. the discussion in Hick 1993 pp.99-111).
[19] Hawkes 1984 p.11
[20] Hawkes 1984 p.34
[21] Soskice 1988 pp.24-26
[22] Soskice 1988 p.24

prior place. These expressions are only clothed in metaphor when they lose interest or fail to be understood. Soskice distinguishes a further category which, in Hawkes scheme, had been classed as a part of the classical model. This is the emotive theory of metaphor.[23] The emotive theory shares the substitutionary account assumption that "a given metaphor could be suppressed with no detriment to the cognitive content of the text in which it was found."[24] However, the emotive theory gives a more positive role to the embellishing function of metaphor than merely that of ornamentation or "alleviating boredom". This account attributes metaphor with a significant emotional content which while providing no new cognitive content does lend emotional import to a literal statement.

Both these accounts of metaphor express aspects of Hick's account of myth in religious language. Hick distinguishes myth from literal truth and claims that the function of the former is not to communicate cognitive content inaccessible through literal language but to evoke an appropriate dispositional response in the hearer. This is a substitutionary account because it assumes that a non-mythological statement could be substituted for a myth with no loss to cognitive content. An example would be the rendering of the belief that the Qur'an was dictated by the archangel Gabriel as a way of "affirming that the Qur'an constitutes an authoritative divine revelation".[25] Furthermore, Hick's account of myth also shares the central features of the emotive theory of metaphor the function of which is to produce appropriate response. Hick interprets the function of myth in emotive terms: "True religious myths are accordingly those that evoke in us attitudes and modes of behaviour which are

[23] Soskice 1988 pp.26-31
[24] Soskice 1988 p.27
[25] Hick 1989a p.349

appropriate to our situation *vis-a-vis* the Real."[26] Hick's account of myth is substitutionary and emotive. The cognitive content of a myth may be expressed in literal terms. The ornamentation a myth provides serves further emotive purposes. Recent thought on the nature of metaphor has highlighted the serious limitations in Hick's approach.

The substitutionary account is reductionistic. It allows for the program of demythologisation where narratives or statements that rely on myth or metaphor are translated into supposed equivalent statements devoid of such optional literary devices. All realist truth claims can be stated in non-metaphorical terms. However, such a formulation is too narrow to be of use in most fields of discourse. Macquarrie points out that "there are degrees of clarity, and it may be the case that some things can be said only obscurely or obliquely".[27] If clarification means the representation of ideas in straightforward, literal sense-experience terms (demythologisation) then Macquarrie suggests: "the possibility of any meaningful theological language would seem to be excluded from the start".[28] While clarity is a virtue it is not clear why geometry or mathematics, for example, should represent the paradigm of clarity to which all other forms of discourse must attempt approximation. The reductionist assumptions with which Hick works can be clearly drawn out by returning to our three step diagrammatic presentation of his epistemology. Figure 7 relates his epistemology to his philosophy of language.

[26] Hick 1989a p.351
[27] Macquarrie 1967 p.17
[28] Macquarrie 1967 p.18

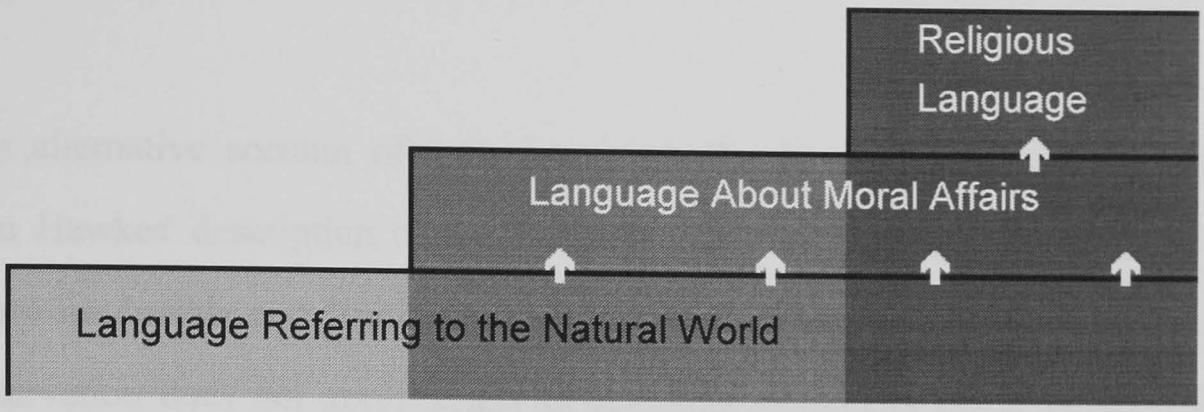

Figure 7 Epistemology and Language

Each step in Hick's epistemology builds on those previous to it. Religious experience is a total interpretation moving one step beyond the moral and two steps beyond the physical but being a reinterpretation of those primary levels of experience. As regards language, religious language is a way of describing the preceding steps of experience, the moral and physical, in terms of a higher level total interpretation offered by religion. Consequently, the literal core of religious language are those aspects which refer either to the natural world (such as the historicity of Jesus or the possibility of continuing existence after death) or to moral affairs (such as the categorical imperative or golden rule). Religious language does not refer to some extra "things" that have not already been expressed in these former levels because it is a level utterly dependent on those previous to it. Religious experience is a way of interpreting the preceding levels, not access to an entirely new order of knowledge. In fact, the same relationship exists between the second level and the first. There is a literal component of moral language because such language is only an interpretation of primary, natural world, experience. The second level may be expressed in literal language at the cost of its emotive value (i.e. its moral compulsion) without affecting the literal sense of such language. So too, the religious level of language may be expressed in moral or natural

language at a cost to its emotive value (i.e. its religious compulsion) but not to its literal sense.

Soskice's alternative account of metaphor is similar to the "high" view described briefly in Hawkes' description of the Romantic view of language. Metaphors, she claims, are irreducible and "can only be redescribed in terms of other metaphors".[29] This observation does not apply solely to religious metaphors but it is particularly appropriate to them. A feature of irreducibility shared by all metaphors is "their relational nature".[30] A metaphor implies "limitless suggestions that are evoked"[31] through the model or network of images that is being drawn upon. For example, to say that "Roger is a chicken" is to engage in a whole related realm of discourse, images and ideas which cannot be accessed by simply saying "Roger is a coward". More significantly, to say "God is my Rock" is to relate God to a whole realm of ideas and cross references within the network of Biblical and even non-Biblical imagery. Instead of a reductionist approach to metaphor Soskice argues that the significance of metaphor can be endlessly extended in ways that a reduced, literal statement could not.[32]

The irreducibility thesis may be explained in terms of a critique on Hick's treatment of myth. To return to the example of the "story" of the garden of Eden, Hick suggests that an adequate demythologised rendering would be "the fact that ordinary human life is lived in alienation from God."[33] We may question this rendering in two ways. Firstly, it is doubtful whether such a statement does convey the full meaning of the

[29] Soskice 1988 p.94
[30] Soskice 1988 p.94
[31] Soskice 1988 p.95
[32] Soskice 1988 p.51
[33] Hick 1988a p.349

Genesis narrative. Secondly, it can be shown that Hick's alternative account fails to be, by his own standards, non-mythological.

Concerning the first question, Hick has identified one aspect of what we should learn from the narrative. However, he offers his gloss as *the* literal statement of the meaning of what is otherwise a mythological story. He expresses no discomfort with the implication that the great wealth of images, events, words, pictures, people and places in the Genesis account are simply ornamentation designed to evoke the proper dispositional response to the literal truth that day to day life is lived in alienation from God. Clearly the first three chapters of Genesis cannot be read as the same kind of literature as a modern text on cosmology. If only such a reading were to permit the narrative the honour of being a "literal" text then it would fail to be literal. However, this is not the point. Because of its place within the context of the Old Testament and ancient near eastern culture, scripture accesses a whole network of ideas and images lost when one reduces the account to a simple "literal" sentence. The web of ideas and images are not an ornamentation of the "literal" meaning - they are its literal meaning. The narrative may be considered in terms of what it tells us about alienation, but so too it may be considered in terms of human nature, God's character, the purpose of creation, early history, near eastern non-Abrahamic beliefs and even the origins of humanity itself. This contrasts with the basic reductionist error of Hick and the classical treatment of metaphor. Soskice expresses the error thus: "In so far as a metaphor suggests a community of relations (and all active metaphors do), its significance is not reducible to a single atomistic predicate."[34] Hick fails to consider this "community of relations" in his program of demythologisation. By substituting his modern literal alternative for the Genesis account he breaks the relationship that

[34] Soskice 1988 p.95

the narrative has with the scriptural and ancient near eastern traditions. In so doing he cannot possibly be describing the 'real meaning' of the Garden of Eden but is describing something entirely different. It is a message of his own making, sharing scriptural themes, but cut off from its true context.

The second question we must pose is whether Hick does succeed in giving a non-mythological account of a myth. To speak of "alienation from God" appears to be simply another, though briefer, example of what Hick wants to class as myth. He uses the term "alienation" metaphorically. Hick takes the word from more ordinary language use of human relationships, cultures and economics and applies it to the unique situation of the human existential feeling of separation from Ultimate Reality.

A similar line of criticism of the classical position can be found in an important work by Barbour in which he compares religious and scientific language use.[35] Hick considers scientific language to be a paradigmatic example of literal language. This is because science belongs to the first step of his epistemology: the interpretation of the physical world. Barbour argues that metaphor is an essential element in all language use, not least in scientific discourse. He asserts that "a metaphor cannot be replaced by a set of equivalent literal statements" because it is, by nature, "open-ended".[36] By open-ended Barbour identifies the same feature of metaphor Soskice describes as relational. Metaphor exists not as a closed, atomic particle of language to be removed from its context and understood in isolation. Metaphor has what Soskice calls "associative networks"[37] of meaning within the context that it is used. Barbour also

[35] Barbour 1966 and 1974
[36] Barbour 1974 p.14
[37] Soskice 1988 p.51

highlights the associative nature of metaphor by drawing attention to the potentially endless comparisons metaphors may suggest:

> No limits can be set as to how far the comparison might be extended; it cannot be paraphrased because it has an unspecifiable number of potentialities for articulation.[38]

Hick denies this point. He is confident that it is possible to exhaustively specify and limit the purposes or functions of the comparisons that make metaphors possible. In doing so he denies the open-ended character of metaphor and the possibility of such language use disclosing new, unique knowledge.

Loughlin had specifically applied the problem of irreducibility to Hick's treatment of myth.[39] He claims that Hick's account is reductionist "in a bad sense" because it renders "myth redundant".[40] The cognitive content of myth may be extracted and the mythic garb discarded.[41] Metaphor is the indispensable means of entering into the Christian narrative and message but, having located oneself within it, Hick demands that we 'demythologise' those metaphors into terms that do not depend upon the Christian framework for their meaning. Loughlin rejects this treatment of myth on the grounds that the meaning of the myth is itself a part of the myth: "we cannot discard the text of myth, for we have only the one".[42] Myth and its meaning are not two components but one. The metaphors of Christianity are essential to what Christianity is. To discard the metaphors is to discard Christianity. This is the effect of Hick's pluralist hypothesis. It constitutes at best a marginalising but at worst a disposing of

[38] Barbour 1974 p.14
[39] Loughlin 1986b
[40] Loughlin 1986b p.271
[41] Loughlin 1986b p.272
[42] Loughlin 1986b p.273

Christian faith in favour of religious faith. Hick's attempt to do so stands in the Enlightenment tradition of placing indeterminate experience and neutral language above the determining power of the historic scriptures, confessions and creeds.

Cultural-Linguistic Apologetics

Lindbeck's alternative model of doctrine does provide a basis for apologetics in which the irreducible nature of language is affirmed. This alternative apologetic construes rationality as intrasystematic. Christian doctrine is not itself to be subjected to the canons of Enlightenment rationality but constitutes its own alternative rationality: the grammar of faith. Lindbeck's rejection of cognitive-propositionalism has not helped his case at this point because it has given the impression that his model permits no extra-linguistic reality.[43] However, the cultural-linguistic model does have an ultimate realist intent. Marshall draws upon Lindbeck's comment that scripture "absorbs the world" in order to demonstrate his account of realism.[44] Scripture is the basic point of justification for religious knowledge. The two basic criteria for truth are intrasystematic coherence and categorical adequacy.[45] Both of these criteria connect truth claims to scripture. However, Lindbeck does not restrict the scope of these criteria to internal Christian claims: "The Christian community will naturally strive to 'internalize' initially alien discourse".[46] Marshall describes this process of absorbing the world as redescription. Alien discourse is redescribed in scriptural categories in order to identify it as either true or false.[47] The basic test for the truth of any religion

[43] i.e. Carson1996 p.480 n.72
[44] Marshall 1990b p.69 cf. Lindbeck 1984 p.118
[45] Marshall 1990b p.71
[46] Marshall 1990b p.74
[47] Marshall 1990b pp.75-77. According to internal Christian criteria (the principle of charity) the aim is, if possible, to redescribe those alien claims in a way that permits them to be held as true.

is its "assimilative powers"[48]. Therefore, the essential element in the justification of Christian belief is its ability to absorb apparent anomalies into its universe. Lindbeck does not deny the scope for apologetics concerning the ontological nature of reality.[49] We shall consider this model of apologetics further below[50] but first we must consider the basis for identifying scripture as fundamental criterion and this will be done through an analysis of the status of revelation in religious knowledge.

[48] Lindbeck 1984 p.131
[49] Lindbeck credits Marshall's interpretation of his work elsewhere as helpfully clearing up the confusion concerning ontology (Lindbeck 1989).
[50] Chapter 6 (c)

Chapter 6 — After Modernism

(a) Religion Without Revelation

Hick's philosophical project is essentially a modernist interpretation of religion. One central presupposition of his work and the movement of which he is a part is the absence of revelation.[1] The essential argument of this section is that Hick's pluralist hypothesis is strictly a non-revelatory account of religion. The significance of revelation for apologetics will become particularly clear in the next section.

Models of Revelation

We will use the models outlined by Dulles[2] as a useful typology for discussing Hick's position. There will be reason to refute Dulles own locating of Hick's position within his proposed typology.

Model 1: Doctrinal Propositional Revelation

The first model is doctrinal. Proponents of this position include "Conservative Evangelicalism and Catholic neo-Scholasticism".[3] Characteristic of this position is the twofold understanding of revelation as natural and supernatural. According to the former proponents only supernatural (special) revelation can lead to any significant knowledge of God whereas according to the latter even natural (general) revelation may lead to partial but valid knowledge of God. A further theme of this model is the verbal propositional form of revelation. According to Evangelicals "the Bible is objectified revelation" alone[4] while the neo-Scholastics "hold that revelation is

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[1] We must refrain at this point from offering a definition of revelation as each of the models to be considered defines the term in different ways.
[2] Dulles 1992
[3] Dulles 1992 p.37
[4] Dulles 1992 p.44

contained in two sources, namely the Bible and apostolic tradition".[5] Proponents of this model place great stress on the verbal form of revelation in scripture itself and assert that salvation requires knowledge of the contents of this saving revelation.[6] Dulles criticises this model for being "highly authoritarian"[7] and not "favourable to dialogue with other churches and religions".[8] It is this model that Hick identifies and rejects in his discussion of the Thomist-Catholic model of faith.[9] Clearly his own thesis cannot be compatible with this model.

Model 2: Revelation as History

There is overlap between the first model and the second. God reveals himself through significant events in history which are, normally, known to us as the verbal records of scripture. Cullman provides just such a mediating position. Though he affirms the priority of events over interpretation he affirms the necessity of those interpretative records for us to have access to revelation.[10] Pannenberg, on the other hand, offers a strictly non-propositional account of revelation history where "the events are self-interpreting"[11] and do not require an independent interpretation for them to count as revelation. Pannenberg adopts a significantly universal account of revelation:

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[5] Dulles 1992 p.45. "When they use the word 'revelation' without qualification, these authors are referring to supernatural revelation." (Dulles 1992 p.41).
[6] Helm affirms this model of revelation (Helm 1982) but without asserting that salvation requires knowledge of that revelation (Helm 1992). There is no necessary connection between this doctrine of revelation and a restrictivist account of salvation. Contrasting references to this point are found in Cotterell 1990, Marshall 1993, Pinnock 1992 and Sinkinson 1996a.
[7] Dulles 1992 p.50
[8] Dulles 1992 p.51
[9] See Chapter 2 (a).
[10] Dulles 1992 p.57
[11] Dulles 1992 p.59

> Revelation, he holds, is not to be found in a special segment of history but rather in universal history - the history of the whole world as it moves to its appointed consummation.[12]

It is problematic to state the historical model without presupposing some sense of propositional revelation[13] but the distinctive character of this model is that the locus of revelation is primarily historical event and only secondarily written or spoken interpretation. Though Hick would be more sympathetic to this model than the first, he would maintain that historical events themselves cannot be revelatory because of their fundamental ambiguity. For example, he claims that "Jeremiah was conscious of the downfall of the kingdom in the seventh century BCE as God's just disciplining of the erring Israelites".[14] As a matter of historical fact Israel had been invaded by a foreign army. The religious dimension of the event is not historical but is the interpretation arising from a special kind of experience of the event (religious seeing-as).

Model 3: Revelation as Inner Experience

The third account departs entirely from the objective sense of revelation marking the former accounts. Revelation occurs in the personal experience of individuals as a form of mystical encounter rather than spoken word. Dulles identifies Rahner as a representative of this position. For Rahner "revelation initially occurs in a mysterious experience with God, called in his system 'transcendental revelation' ".[15] According to this model revelation is not communication of objective truths but encounter with a person. Dulles' example of Sabatier indicates that Schleiermacher might be a classic

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[12] Dulles 1992 p.59
[13] Warfield's criticism to this effect is noted in Dulles 1992 p.62.
[14] Hick 1989a p.155
[15] Dulles 1992 p.70

example of this model.[16] The prophets represent peak examples of this experience of personal familiarity with God. No distinction is made between revelation and response to revelation; revelation is itself the salvific event. Dulles locates Hick in this model:

> The great founders of religions, [Hick] holds, are persons on whose consciousness the Transcendent has impinged in new ways with special intensity and power. Since the same infinite Spirit presses in continually on every individual, it is possible, Hick contends, for others to find meaning and credibility in what the mystics claim to have experienced.[17]

This characterisation of Hick's position emphasises the theme of universality in his work. In keeping with the philosophy of Kant, Hick shares the assumption that religious experience is universal. Hick asserts both that religious experience may be identified with divine revelation and that religious experience is universal. The result of this double assertion is that revelation must be a universal phenomena. Dulles also places Hick's position in his fifth model and this will shed further light on Hick's understanding of revelation. Before we turn to that final model we will briefly consider the fourth model

Model 4: The Dialectical Model of Revelation

The fourth model is that of revelation as dialectical presence and is foundational to the theology of Barth, Brunner and Bultmann.[18] Proponents of this model locate revelation in an event which is neither an objective "thing" (such as the Bible) in

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16 "Sabatier's position is close to that of Schleiermacher" Dulles 1992 p.73 cf. Schleiermacher 1960 pp.49-52. Schleiermacher writes "Any proclamation of God which is to be operative upon and with us can only express God in his relation to us". He argues that "a consciouness of God" wherever it arises may still "be really a revelation" because revelation resides in inner experience rather than doctrinal form (Schleiermacher 1960 p.52). See further Clements 1987 pp.66-107.

17 Dulles 1992 p.70

18 Dulles 1992 p.85

isolation from the response of people nor a subjective happening (such as inner illumination) in isolation from the sovereign action of God. The alternative is a dialectical relationship between the objective and subjective poles of reality:

> Revelation, according to Barth, is never complete with the objective element of God's self-disclosure through his Son, for the fact of that disclosure is not apparent without the subjective transformation by which the Holy Spirit renders us capable of acknowledging what has happened.[19]

According to this model objective factors, such as scripture, are classed as witnesses to revelation. Revelation itself is a dialectical event of God's self-disclosure which creates its own response in the recipient. For this reason revelation is itself salvific.[20]

Apologetics is an invalid activity within the parameters of this model though the model itself does have apologetic impact: "denying the need to make faith plausible, dialectical theology in fact removed many objections based on the alleged implausibility of the Christian message."[21] This account poses revelation as beyond or incompatible with rational dispute and analysis. Hick's account of revelation clearly bears no relation to it. In terms of both method and content the dialectical model is profoundly exclusivist as revelation is identified with Christ as God's self-disclosure. Such a specification destroys the possibility of universal revelation in the way proposed by Kant and Hick. The dialectical model describes revelation only in terms of Christian theology and not in terms of any general philosophical categories.

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[19] Dulles 1992 p.89
[20] In the case of Barth there is an ambiguity in this connection discussed by Colwell "The Contemporaneity of the Divine Decision: Reflections on Barth's Denial of 'Universalism' " in Cameron 1992. See also Hart 1992.
[21] Dulles 1992 p.93

Model 5: Revelation as New Awareness

The fifth model departs from the previous in granting to the human subject a significantly active role in the creation of revelation. Revelation as new awareness departs from the notion of revelation as something given to humanity from outside; "According to this approach revelation is a transcendent fulfilment of the inner drive of the human spirit toward fuller consciousness."[22]

Proponents of this model relate revelation to human progress. Revelation accompanies the progressively developing human faculties. Like the third model human experience is the central theme, however it "finds revelation not in withdrawal from the world but rather in involvement."[23] Discourse concerning the contents of revelation do not identify a self-existing, independent God but identify self-consciousness. Because revelation is tied to human consciousness it is easy to universally extend the range and application of this model. Revelation as consciousness requires no particular doctrinal pattern but only the consciousness of human subjects and is, hence, not unique to Christianity. Dulles locates Hick in this model along with his location in model three:

> Hick's recognition of revelation in the non-Christian religions rests on the premise that revelation does not essentially consist in doctrine but in encounter and awareness.[24]

The fifth model offers an interpretation of revelation not dependent on any particular tradition and ideally suited to the pluralist project. Revelation "has no fixed content"

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[22] Dulles 1992 p.98
[23] Dulles 1992 p.102
[24] Dulles 1992 p.107

and past doctrines are "subject to continual reinterpretation".[25] This model shares with the third and fourth models a sense of the contemporaneity of revelation but, in contrast to them, does not allow any non-subjective source to act as a control over claims to revelation. Dulles treats it as a model of Christian revelation even though it gives no special status to the norms of the Christian faith:

> It encourages Christians to believe that their own faith could undergo a further development in the distinction of universality by appreciating the perspectives of other human faiths.[26]

However it is this very openness that is problematic for the fifth model. The Christian form of this claim[27] is that it is Christ who reveals himself even through the unfolding consciousness of non-Christian people. The claim is problematic in two significant ways. First, it creates a sharp distinction between the historical Jesus and the super-historical Christ.[28] Second, it empties the name 'Christ' of all particular meaning; "One wonders in some cases whether Christ is being made into a mere cipher for an epochal advance in human consciousness."[29] Taken together, these problems suggest that the model simply uses Christ and other Christian terms as useful labels for an otherwise non-Christian or even secular set of concepts and ideas. 'Christ' becomes simply a token to describe a broad movement of consciousness only loosely related to the historical figure of Jesus.

Models of Revelation in Hick's Religious Apologetic

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[25] Dulles 1992 p.109
[26] Dulles 1992 p.111
[27] i.e. Teilhard de Chardin or Gregory Baum (Dulles 1992 p.110).
[28] Dulles also notes this difficulty with the dialectical model; "they are far from clear as to how the Christ of faith is related to the Jesus of history." (Dulles 1992 p.95)
[29] Dulles 1992 p.112

We have now considered five models of revelation and Hick's possible location within them. He would reject the basic theme of models one, two and four. In each case he must reject the implicit or explicit exclusivity and normativity the models give to Christian revelation. The essence of Hick's rejection would be that the pluralist hypothesis depends upon the universal accessibility of revelation and its ambiguity in relation to the interpretative faculty of human cognition. His sympathies would certainly lie with models three and five as they share a noetic picture of revelation arising from the universal human experience of religious people. However, we shall now see that Dulles is mistaken to categorise Hick even within these models. For the pluralist hypothesis to be successful Hick must maintain that there is no such thing as revelation in any of these senses. In maintaining this Hick is simply extending the Enlightenment interpretation of religion begun by Kant.

Dulles argues that Hick uses a version of the third model: revelation as inner experience. According to the third model a distinction is drawn between non-propositional knowledge and conceptual or propositional knowledge. Revelation is knowledge of the former variety. Hick has always aligned himself with this model of religious knowledge and his first major work is a defence of this position.[30] Indeed, some early statements of his experience centred model show an important resemblance to the fourth model: "revelation is only real or actual in so far as it *becomes* so by being responded to".[31] While Hick maintains the primacy of a disclosure from the divine as revelation its reality only becomes actual when people respond to it. Hick ties together revelation and response such that the locus of revelation is an inner experience rather than an objective word or act.

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[30] Hick 1988a
[31] Hick 1974b p.145

The historical account of the axial age suggests that Hick is a proponent of the fifth model. According to this model, revelation is closely allied to the evolution of human consciousness. Hick describes a major transition in personal awareness that occurred at that time. The transition was from the identification of self with tribe or society (pre-axial consciousness) to self-identity in relationship to others and to a greater Other (axial consciousness). It is ambiguous whether the Divine instigated this transitional period or whether it is a natural stage in the evolution of human consciousness.

The plurality of revelation claims leads Hick to ask "whether we should not expect God to make his revelation in a single mighty act, rather than to produce a number of different, and therefore presumably partial, revelations".[32] This question assumes that the meaning of revelation includes the act of God doing something. He characterises the discussion of revelation as God choosing to do one of two things; either to 'make' one universal revelation or 'produce' several revelations. God might 'act' in one definitive way or reveal in a partial way. According to Hick, God chooses to produce partial revelation as this fits most neatly with the moral requirements of faith that ultimate truth is universally accessible and epistemically uncompelled. Nonetheless, the underlying image of Hick's description is of God doing something to reveal Him/Her/Itself.

It is significant that the word "revelation" is absent from a later account of the axial period.[33] This reflects the superfluous nature of the concept in Hick's work. Despite

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[32] Hick 1988a p.136
[33] Hick 1989a pp.12, 21-33.

occasional reference that Hick continues to make to God's revealing activity we may identify five reasons why Hick's philosophy of religion must be understood as strictly non-revelatory. Hick's and Dulles' own claims notwithstanding, Hick has developed a philosophy of religion without revelation.

1. The Epistemic Impossibility of Revelation

In considering Hick's debt to Kant's epistemology we have noted the problems that attend the adoption of the basic Kantian insight that the noumenon and phenomena sharply divide reality. The main difficulty is that to be consistent one must maintain that noumena bear no causal relationship, influence or otherwise, upon the phenomena. It remains possible to describe a formal connection between noumena and phenomena but, being a postulate and belonging to the phenomenal order of knowledge, such a formal connection provides no epistemic access to anything beyond phenomena. Normally, this problem is applied in terms of the inability of the human mind to penetrate beyond appearances to know the thing-in-itself, but the problem is symmetrical. It is also impossible for the thing-in-itself to reveal itself as phenomenon or as the thing-for-others. The barrier is insurmountable from either side because it supposes that all knowledge is conditioned by the mind and therefore never knowledge of noumena but only of phenomena. The object of all knowledge is appearances, never reality. So just as realism presupposes that at least some aspects of reality are accessible to the human mind, so revelation presupposes that at least some significant qualities of God may be made known to the human mind. Philosophical realism and theological revelation both assume the possibility of a relationship between knower and known. The absolute separation of appearances from reality makes this connection an impossibility. The Kantian insight rules out the possibility of an epistemic relationship between revealer and the recipient of revelation. The

price of Hick's use of Kant is the possibility that the Ultimate Real might disclose 'Realself' in any way whether personal or propositional.

2. The Non-Personal Deity

In order to sustain his pluralist proposal Hick must maintain that the Ultimate Real is beyond the categories of the mind, just as Kant's noumenon could not be conceptualised in terms of the categories of the mind. The categories of the mind according to Hick include the concepts of personal and non-personal deity. Examples of the personal include God the Father and of the non-personal Nirvana. Hick notes the widespread "personification" of the Real in both religions of Semitic origin and in the religions identified by the west as "Hinduism".[34] However, to be personal is, in essence, to be in personal relationship with other centres of consciousness. While the phenomenal manifestations of the Real may be described as personal, such a quality cannot apply to the Real-in-itself: "It follows from this that the Real *an sich* cannot be said to be personal. For this would presuppose that the Real is eternally in relation to other persons."[35] Personality and relationship are categories belonging to human beings and therefore they are categories that belong necessarily and exclusively to the order of phenomenon. The reason why the Real is so often conceived in personal terms is that, as Hick often points out, things are known by the knower according to the mode of the knower. This seems a tidy explanation for the widespread ascription of personality to the divine being.

However, a difficulty arises because of the widespread image of the Real as impersonal and this requires Hick to extend his analysis to incorporate this apparently

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[34] Hick 1989a pp.252-253
[35] Hick 1989a p.264

rival point of view. The great example of the impersonae of the Real is the Buddhist goal of Nirvana which Hick describes as "the Real experienced in an ineffable ego-lessness" in which personal identity is extinguished.[36] Other examples include Brahman and Sunyata. Hick denies that such an impersonal reality is a closer approximation to his idea of the Ultimate Real than the images of theism. He recognises that his work might suggest such a conclusion for he admits that, to a point, "our pluralistic hypothesis runs parallel to this central strand of Mahayana Buddhism."[37] The difference between pluralism and Mahayana Buddhism is that the latter identifies its impersonae with the Real-in-itself, accessible through mystical experience, but accords only other images with the status of representation. Hick claims that this identification between phenomenal manifestation and Real is not made by the pluralist hypothesis because all manifestations are given the status of representations. According to Hick, the impersonal images too are phenomenal representations of the noumenal Real. Thus, the phenomena appear in varied and even contradictory forms but each are understood to be representations of the same reality behind them all. Pluralism accords no religion with superior epistemic status and this means that no manifestation of the Real can cancel out the validity of rival manifestations.

The conclusion of Hick's argument is that the Real is neither personal nor impersonal, though such images are essential in order to experience the Real. This raises a problem. His attempt to steer clear of privileging any tradition requires that he deny the ultimate validity of any specific descriptions of the Real. He must then deny the personal attributes accredited to God by Christians. Love, will, faithfulness and

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[36] Hick 1989a p.287
[37] Hick 1989a p.292

relationship are not compatible with the attributes of Brahman or Nirvana and so must be denied ultimate validity. They function as myths or metaphors, not as literal truth claims. While Hick is not affirming the impersonae of the Real over the personae he is affirming the non-personal nature of the Real. He must affirm this because the category of the "personal" belongs only to the phenomenal realm. The category cannot apply to the noumenal. Because in Kant's epistemology quantity, quality, space and time are all judgements made by the mind they cannot apply to the noumenal order of reality. They are only categories for reality-as-perceived. Analogously, the personal attributes of God belong to the character of human experience and are not applicable to the thing-in-itself. It then follows that the category of "revealer" which itself assumes personal attributes of, minimally, relationship and will to disclose though, in Christian terms, includes also purpose, faithfulness and love, cannot apply to the Real-in-itself. The noumenon, whatever else it is, cannot be a revealer.[38]

3. Cognitive Freedom

We have described Hick's epistemology in terms of its three component steps. Each step of interpretation involves increased complexity as it relates to greater ambiguity in the basic data of knowledge. Also related to each step is an increasing cognitive freedom on the part of the believer as to how he or she may choose to interpret his or her environment. At the level of natural interpretation one may describe belief as coerced. At the level of religious faith, however, interpretation is uncoerced because this dimension is ambiguous, permitting a plurality of interpretations. One major reason for this ambiguity is in the mind. It is within the structure of the mind that there is a separation of knowledge from reality because the mind is simply unable to grasp

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[38] Brunner argues that revelation is essentially a personal self-manifestation of God (Brunner 1947 pp.23-25).

religious reality in the way that it is able to grasp natural reality. However, Hick also maintains a set of theological or moral reasons for this ambiguity and it is these that provide the third reason for the impossibility of revelation. According to Hick's theodicy human beings must learn to use their cognitive apparatus properly and this means turning from self-centredness to Reality-centredness: "This greater cognitive freedom at the religious level is correlated with the greater claim upon us of the aspect of reality in question."[39] The Real has a claim upon our lives but permits us the epistemic freedom that ensures the ethical value of any response we make. In order to ensure that human beings are truly responsible for their actions in this regard the Ultimate Real must not compel or coerce the proper response. The transformation can only be morally significant if people have the basic cognitive freedom to exercise autonomous decisions. We have already noted the anthropology Hick shares with Kant.[40] This common anthropology requires libertarian free will as a presupposition for human responsibility. As a result, for faith to be a good moral action on the part of the human subject, it must be uncompelled.

This feature of Hick's thought rules out revelation. If the divine were to disclose anything to us it would in some measure compromise the freedom of our response. Revelation, in any model, implies an act on the part of the revealer that makes clear something otherwise hidden. Hick cannot tolerate this implication because it would compromise true cognitive freedom. Revelation would dispel, at least to some extent and to some recipients, the ambiguity of the universe. In so doing, a human subject would have less freedom to choose not to believe. The greater the extent to which revelation occurs the more akin to natural interpretation the religious level becomes.

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[39] Hick 1989a p.161
[40] Chapter 4 (d).

While human categories and concepts are still being brought to bear it would then be the divine reality compelling a certain response. For Hick's proposal to work there must be no revelation from the Ultimate Real to human beings.

4: The Distinction Between Myth and Fact

Mythological language serves a non-fact bearing function which facilitates soteriological transformation.[41] Its use helps orientate the lives of hearers and users toward Reality-centredness. Its use does not and cannot disclose new features of reality. This latter function is the exclusive domain of factual language use. However, according to Hick, the nature of Ultimate Reality is too great, complex and different to be expressed in human language. Statements that purport to be about the Ultimate Real must then be interpreted as helpful myths rather than cognitive truth claims. The exceptions that we noted are those purely formal descriptions of the postulates of religious life: that there is an Ultimate Reality and that life extends beyond death.

This has serious consequences for any claim that revelation has occurred. Revelation, understood to be the disclosure of some information, could be conceived as occurring through words, emotions or behaviour. However, whatever the mode of its occurrence for it to count as the disclosure of information it must be possible to state it in propositional form.[42] Yet, according to Hick, informative statements about the Real or about supernatural reality can only be either formal, logical postulates or mythological. Such statements are excluded from the role of fact assertion for the reasons already discussed. Furthermore, the purely formal statements are not revelation but postulates of human experience. All "revelation" and claims to

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[41] Chapter 5 (b)
[42] Helm 1982 pp.21-27; Goldingay 1994 pp.299-313

revelation must be mythological language use or false literal claims. Hick's distinction between myth and fact necessarily means that the contents of revelation cannot be divine disclosure of information but must be an attempt to evoke a proper attitudinal response on the part of the human subject. Within Hick's scheme revelation cannot be classed as any other language type than myth. This classification disqualifies revelation from having any significance other than the self-referential role of shaping the emotional response of users and hearers to the ambiguous universe.

5. A History of the Universe

A final feature of Hick's philosophy also destroys the possibility of revelation. His description of the history of religions is nothing more than a history of the evolution of the human consciousness and, for this reason, has no place for the revelatory activity of the Real.

The phenomenological account of religious history offered by Hick is presented in three stages of awareness. First, there is the pre-Axial age of corporate spirituality where religion serves the social function of preserving harmony and where individual spirituality has no function because no distinction exists between corporate and personal identity. Second, the axial age was the period of enlightenment when personal identity was discovered and human beings related themselves to a higher dimension of love and purpose. Third, the post-axial age includes some retrogressive steps but, on the whole, the primary discovery of the axial age, the I-Thou relationship, is preserved and spread across the globe.

The reason why Dulles locates Hick in the fifth model is that Hick's history of religions is apparently a history of revelation arising from the development of human consciousness. It was the growing awareness of individuality within society that led to

a new awareness of the divine Reality indwelling all of the universe and offering purpose and goodness to individuals. Revelation is identified with the activity of human subjectivity and, in this model, requires no sense of revelation *from without*. The sense of revelation as divinely initiated communication is absent from this model. Dulles critiques the model in terms of Christian theology for its vacuous use of Christology. However, this objection may be extended to note that the concept of revelation itself becomes vacuous. The term 'revelation' identifies the discovery of new consciousness through the cognitive activity of the human subject. It has none of its normal meaning or suggestive power because it is emptied of any reference to a "revealer". This is why Hick's position has most in common with the fifth model. However, unlike the fifth model Hick does not invest eschatological hope for the developing consciousness of humanity in this life.[43] Other clear proponents of the fifth model do assert such eschatological hope by specifying the necessary conditions and mechanisms that would lead human beings into a greater mystical awareness.[44] However, Hick is more concerned with the impact of the past than any predictions of the future. This lifetime is marked by reference to the high point of the axial age and its ripples into our own lives but not by a continually developing realisation of the cosmic dimension of life. According to Hick's scheme the 'new consciousness' has ceased development or at least its development has been postponed until some future scenario beyond the grave.

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[43] The "eschatological vision" of Hick 1988b p.146 is offered only as a possibility.

[44] Teilhard suggests evolutionary energetics as the necessary mechanism for the self-evolution of humanity to the new stage of consciousness. Given, the blend of natural processes (evolution) and mystical awareness a new stage of religious consciousness will be born. See King 1980 pp.186-191.

Conclusion of these Objections

The point of these five objections is to demonstrate that Hick's system has no place for divine revelation. The character of faith is essentially a rational activity and this is why epistemology has the prime place in Hick's work. Religious experience is itself a rational response to the perception of reality. Faith is not in any significant sense a response to a divine revelation. Revelation cannot occur within the Kantian epistemology because the concept must assume a personal Revealer. Revelation compromises cognitive freedom. It breaks the barriers of the myth/fact distinction and it has no place in the history of religions. Hick has followed through the implications of the Enlightenment project to its conclusion and described a religion without revelation. Because there is no revelation he is able to maintain the universality of faith which does not need the particular forms it may take such as Christian belief. The place of God in the work of Hick and Kant is not as revealer but as a necessary presupposition for what they consider to be the more fundamental fact of existence: morality.

The benefits of an account of religion without revelation must be compared to the attendant problems for any attempt to make substantial claims concerning religious truth. Hick leaves himself without any grounds or authority for asserting anything positive about the Real. The proper object of Hick's study is not the knowledge of God but human epistemology itself: the knowledge of human consciousness. In the light of this analysis any theological claims he makes regarding the existence of a divine being, such as her/his/its goodness and love, or life beyond death have only the status of postulates.

(b) Reason Within Revelation

In deliberate contrast to Hick's proposal we shall now consider in outline a basis for apologetic dialogue which relies upon the assumption that there is divine revelation. There is not the space here to argue in detail for the coherence of any particular model of revelation in detail. Some preliminary remarks will be made regarding a general category of Christian revelation upon which the rest of the discussion will be based.

Various writers have offered reappraisal's of revelation in which an element of propositionalism is considered central.[1] We may consider some of their arguments in order to make our case for the verbal-propositional component of revelation. It must first be noted that revelation always supposes a wider cultural linguistic context. To describe revelation as the divine disclosure of information does not imply that we must ignore the cultural factors that were part of that revelation. The information will be communicated through words, people, historical actions and so forth. To this extent, there is little reason to deny Hick's argument that all knowledge is known by the knower according to the mode of the knower. We might say that all revelation is revealed according to the context of those revealed to. This point is of little interest. All teachers convey information in appropriate form and idiom depending on the supposed recipients. Divine revelation might simply follow this pattern. God would then convey information in a form appropriate to those being revealed to. The wider

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[1] Helm 1982, Abraham 1982, Swinburne 1992 (cf. Byrne 1993), Wolterstorff 1995. According to the Dulles typology these may fit best with the first model of revelation. However, they are more nuanced accounts than those considered by Dulles. For instance, Helm incorporates some valid insights from the Barthian critique of propositionalism which would fit Dulles' model four. He distinguishes between the objective order of public revelation and the need for illumination on the part of those who recognise revelation for what it is (Helm 1982 p.20). See further Frame 1986.

cultural linguistic context is important to the form that revelation takes but it does not count against the possibility of revelation taking place.

Abraham argues that no account of revelation is possible which is not a propositional account of revelation. His argument is that propositionalism best expresses the notion that revelation is "the view that God has spoken to particular individuals to reveal His intentions and purposes".[2] The possibility of speech, information, intentions and purposes being expressed depends entirely on this activity of God being verbal in form. Furthermore, central Christian understandings of God's activity depend upon a propositional possibility:

> a theology without the concept of divine speaking has of necessity a God who cannot forgive, command or make promises. The reason for this is that forgiving, commanding, and promising are performative utterances.[3]

A God who does not or cannot speak does not or cannot forgive, command or promise. This conclusion follows from the very definition of those terms. So divine speech is not only possible but necessary for the Christian doctrine of God. Abraham poses the possibilities in stark terms: either God communicates verbally or the alternative "is not just a tentative, carefully qualified guessing at what God is doing, but a radical agnosticism."[4] Abraham expresses well the dilemma that arises directly from Hick's work and we may analyse these implications with reference to his three level epistemology before offering an alternative.

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[2] Abraham 1982 p.10
[3] Abraham 1982 p.21
[4] Abraham 1982 p.21

The non-revealing Ultimate Reality postulated in Hick's system requires agnosticism in response. If God does not speak, then God's character, intentions, purposes and existence are outside the scope of human knowledge. The result of Hick's project is a philosophical position directly contrary to the alternative revelation-constituted apologetics we shall consider in a moment. This result may be shown with reference to the step diagram.

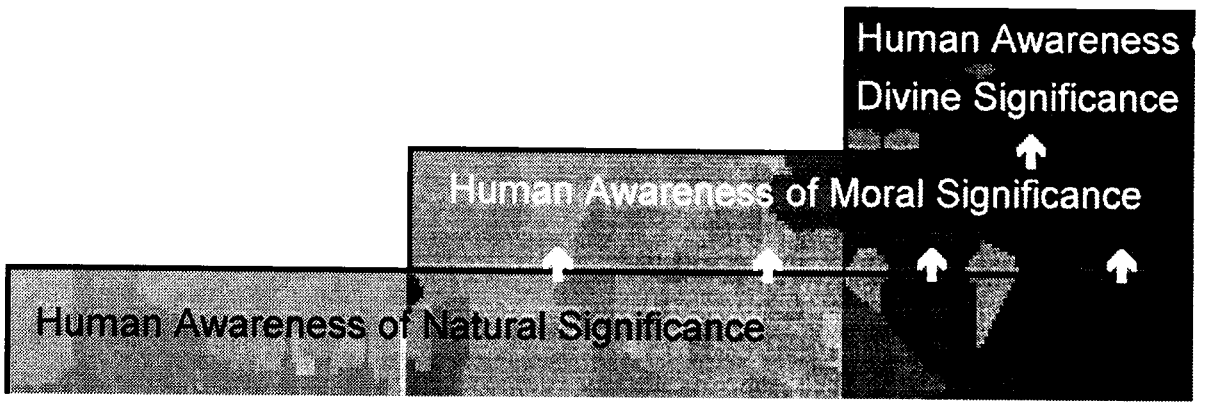

Figure 8 Hick's Model for the Knowledge of the Divine

The knowledge of God, according to Hick, arises with the human response to the environment as a total interpretation of experience. The total interpretation brings together experience of physical reality, moral reality and divine reality into a whole that yields the basis for postulating the existence of an Ultimate Real and human life extending beyond death. Clearly, there is no divine initiative in revelation and certainly no divinely communicated information:

> Faith is an element within this totality in that it is the human recognition of ambiguous events as revelatory, and hence the experiencing of them as

mediating the presence and activity of God.[5]

Revelation arises from human experience rather than from divine initiative. While in his early work Hick does still describe God as active, this element was never necessary and its subsequent abandonment does not alter this basic epistemology. Hick then draws a faulty distinction between revelation and the propositional formulation of revelation:

> The theological propositions formulated on the basis of revelation have a secondary status. They do not constitute the content of God's self-revelation but are human and, therefore, fallible verbalizations, construed to aid both the integration of our religious experience into our minds and the communication of religious experience to others.[6]

Propositional revelation would be a contradiction in terms for Hick's systematic experiential-expressivist analysis. Propositions are necessarily second-order reflection upon revelation. They are a product of reason in response to the act of faith. The revelation to which primary faith responds is non-propositional religious experience. Thus Hick draws a sharp distinction between initial revelation and subsequent linguistic formulation. In this way he is able to empty Christian theology of any privileged access to truth but only at the price of denying the possibility of revelation in any real sense. Revelation without any propositional component would not be a case of communication and thus not personal revelation in any ordinary sense of personal.

[5] Hick 1988a p.28
[6] Hick 1988a p.29

Against Hick's Agnosticism

Without revelation as divine communication Hick's philosophy remains agnostic regarding the existence and will of God. This is a necessary step in order to adopt the full global pluralist scheme with its inclusion of non-theistic religion. It is also a profoundly non-Christian position to take. We may now consider a Christian approach to apologetics in which revelation does not have this dispensable status but, in contrast, is foundational to the whole tradition of enquiry.

According to this alternative model revelation provides the foundations upon which the interpretation of spirituality, morality and even the natural order are based. Rather than being a peak in the development of human awareness, as in Hick's model, revelation is the very basis from which the understanding of both spiritual reality, such as the will of God, and natural reality, such as the origin and purpose of the earth, is developed. Revelation has a prior epistemic status in human knowledge and awareness. The first step in this scheme is the divine disclosure of information. That information might include the will, character and love of God[7] along with the purpose, origin and future of humanity. This information will in some sense be propositional in form. It is only on the basis of this revelation that any properly Christian interpretation of morality and even the natural universe can take place. Such a model offers a tradition-constituted approach to knowledge which places prior status to the linguistic and cultural context of believers. That context is formed by revelation itself. While it is natural to construe revelation in terms of its cultural-linguistic form, the exact locus of revelation is debated as Dulles' models of revelation show.[8] Wherever

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[7] The existence and personal nature of God is bound up in the revelation. Hence, the writings of the Bible contain no arguments for the existence or character of God. They are better understood as a display of His existence and character.

[8] See also the historical account of models in McDonald 1959 and 1963 who traces the course of doctrines of revelation through two hundred years of Christian thought.

the exact locus is specified it must be closely related to scripture itself and so it is the Bible that is most obviously foundational to the Christian apologist.[9] Because science and morality are themselves dependent on this revelatory first step they cannot themselves provide the basis for justification. This suggests that the place of epistemology is not quite so foundational to Christian faith after all. As we will explore in the next and final sections, a better place to start if one would speak of foundations would be the contents of revelation themselves: the narrative of Scripture. It is in the light of this that a Christian theology of faith, knowledge, other religions and apologetics can be developed. The methodology that led Hick to espouse pluralism is flawed. It is not surprising that the conclusion of his corpus as expressed in An Interpretation of Religion should be the relativisation of religious truth claims because the introduction to his corpus as expressed in Faith and Knowledge already relativise the source of Christian knowledge. As D.Z.Phillips has described the impact of foundationalism on theology:

> we are asked to accept as the only appropriate philosophical method for establishing the rationality of religious belief, a method which actually distorts the character of religious belief.[10]

The method that Hick outlines for the justification of Christian faith in his earliest work is one that would inevitably reconstruct Christian belief. The main reason for this is that it was based upon a philosophical foundationalism independent of revelation.

See further Baillie 1956

[9] In recent years this has become an increasingly viable position to take. To recognise the authoritative role of scripture in forming the cultural linguistic context of Christian thought (Lindbeck 1984) requires some sense in which that scripture is to be taken as revelatory. See particularly Thiselton 1980 and Goldingay 1994.

[10] Phillips 1988 p.12

Revelation and Apologetics

The revelation constituted model for knowledge implies a tradition constituted mode of enquiry. Apologetic encounter and theological reflection all take place within a community shaped not by neutral data of nature or supposed general beliefs about God, morals and the world but within a community shaped by the narrative of scripture. The verbal structure of revelation implies that some of Lindbeck's basic insights in the cultural-linguistic model must be correct. Experience and awareness do not occur raw, but only within a framework that is necessarily verbal. Language shapes the patterns of the mind and communal behaviour giving it a natural precedence over reason and reflection. Revelation occurs at this point. God creates the linguistic framework in which reality can be understood aright.

It will be objected that this alternative model fails to take seriously Hick's main point that the operation of culture as a cognitive filter rules out the possibility of direct access to any revelation untainted by prejudice and bias. Hick would object that this alternative pattern of knowledge is seriously naive. He would claim that revelation cannot occur outside of a *pre-existing* framework of knowledge, morality, awareness and values. Furthermore, according to Hick, revelation can only be identified as such on the basis of pre-conceived experience. The main reply to this possible objection is that his problem arises only because he already prioritises experience over language. His cognitive picture is one in which there are pre-theoretical, non-verbal experiences which give rise to a framework that must precede revelation. This alternative model may support the fact of a pre-existing cultural framework (though affirming that this framework is profoundly linguistic in nature) but it rejects the notion that this cultural framework can itself give rise to revelation. Revelation is the result of divine initiative: the world is confronted, challenged and transformed by God's revelation.

This is why the church is *ekklesia*: it is a community "called out" of the world by the summons of divine revelation. Verbal revelation presupposes certain language uses but also recreates them. This is the unfolding pattern of the Biblical narrative - at least when understood as a whole.[11] It is the unfolding narrative of God's creation of a community for Himself with its fulfilment in Christ.[12]

In contrast to the essentially Kantian nature of Hick's project the revelation-constituted model will conceive apologetics as only possible within the context of revealed truth. Neither reason nor morality may act as arbiters apart from revelation. Rather, reason and morality will themselves be defined by and used in the service of revelation. As a basis for apologetics this raises several questions. Griffiths suggested three basic assumptions upon which any meaningful apologetic will be based.[13] The first of these is the possibility of identifying and formulating conflicting truth claims. The second assumption is that at least some religious truth claims make reference to universal reality; including the reality of the unbeliever. The third assumption is that the reality that these truth claims refer to is distinct from the claims themselves. Each of these assumptions involves some kind of presupposed point of contact between Christianity and unbelief. A revelation constituted form of enquiry raises difficulties for the notion of a point of contact. If revelation forms the basis for all Christian thinking then Christian thinking seems to be *sui generis*. If this does follow then the claim that Christianity is true is tautologous. 'Truth' has a specific Christian meaning which applies nowhere else. The only activity remaining for the Christian apologist is to tell the Christian story: to repeat the revelation narrative of scripture. According to the

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[11] For example, Carson 1996 p.193-345.
[12] Narrative is used here in the sense of the story, expressed in verbal linguistic form, contained in the Bible. The term is not used here in the more technical sense of 'narrative theology' to which we shall return in Chapter 6 (d).
[13] Chapter 1(a)

definition offered by Griffiths this is not apologetics. However, this conclusion need not follow. Certainly, the strategy for a non-foundationalist apologetic will be more complex and perhaps less hopeful in securing its objectives than the kind of apologetic offered by Hick. A number of thinkers have developed a non-foundationalist approach to apologetics and we shall consider the relationship of epistemology to religion found in their work.[14] This will lead to the possibility of an alternative strategy for apologetics and pluralism.

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[14] Representatives would include Clark 1990, Clouser 1991, Frame 1987, 1994, Mavrodes 1970, Newbigin 1989, Plantinga 1983, 1992 and Wolterstorff 1964, 1983. The basic non-foundationalist (or non-classical-foundationalist in the case of Plantinga) point underlying this range of thinkers should not obscure the great variety and differences between them on a whole range of issues including the implications for apologetics. D.Z.Phillips argues that the tradition identified here is not truly non-foundationalist and we shall take issue with his interpretation (Phillips 1988 pp.38-52).

(c) Christian Apologetics

We have now outlined and analysed Hick's attempt to justify Christian belief. His work has been taken to constitute a model of modernist apologetics. His epistemology provides a basic statement of the nature of religious knowledge and the means for its justification. Though this epistemology has developed we have shown that it has never had to be radically revised despite the revolutionary changes in his theological position. This is because his epistemology quite naturally leads to the pluralist hypothesis. In effect, the form of apologetics commended by Hick is one that empties Christian theology of all particular content. It does so because the content of Christian revelation is relativised in favour of a prior authority given to his account of epistemology. Theology begins, according to Hick, with the human knower, not with the divine revealer. For this reason Hick is not and never has been an apologist for Christianity. The position he outlines is a "religious apologetic" or an apologetic for religious knowledge in general whatever specific form it takes. Therefore, it has little to offer the construction of a properly Christian model for apologetics. In contrast we shall now consider two proposals for a Christian apologetic.

Plantinga understands Christian philosophy to be a distinct discipline.[1] He describes Augustinian Christian philosophy as a perspective inherently shaped and formed by Christian belief. Philosophy, far from being a neutral practice, is always grounded in a faith perspective of ultimate commitments.[2] This is the central idea in the movement known as Reformed epistemology.[3] A central feature of this movement, similar to the

[1] See especially Plantinga and Wolterstorff 1991. Wolterstorff 1964 discusses in detail the primary role of faith in shaping all philosophical traditions.
[2] Parallel arguments concerning wider disciplines in the sciences are to be found in Clouser 1991.
[3] A helpful discussion and analysis of this movement from a Roman Catholic

claim of the non-foundationalists,[4] is the claim that the primary presuppositions of faith, such as the claim that God exists, are "basic".

Natural Theology and Foundationalism

Plantinga rejects the possibility and the necessity of natural theology and natural atheology (the denial of theological claims from the evidence of the physical universe, reason and so forth). Both forms of thought are, according to Plantinga, examples of classical foundationalism. Natural atheology takes the form of the claim that "belief in God is irrational or unreasonable or not rationally acceptable or intellectually irresponsible or somehow noetically below par because, as they say, there is *insufficient evidence* for it."[5] This objection is stated in various ways including the internal incoherence of the concept "God" and the logical incompatibility or improbability of God's existence with the existence of evil.

Plantinga offers Aquinas as the example, *par excellence*, of a natural theologian.[6] Aquinas, following Aristotle, distinguishes between two forms of knowledge: "what is

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viewpoint is offered in a range of essays contained in Zagzebski 1993. A sustained critique of the work of Plantinga is found in Messer 1993.

[4] Malcolm and Kuhn in Chapter 1. Phillips argues that this connection is superficial (Phillips 1988 p.38). It is true that at many crucial points Plantinga's language is very different from that of Wittgenstein. In particular, Phillips is critical of the way that Plantinga isolates basic beliefs from the surrounding context of belief (p.41). However, the real difference between Plantinga and Phillips is that the latter rules out the practice of apologetics. He commends Wittgenstein only because his "is a conception of philosophy and epistemology which is neither for nor against religion" whereas Reformed Epistemology "remains captive to an apologetic conception of epistemology." (p.113). Topping 1991 details the anti-foundationalist status of Reformed epistemology. On Phillips see Frei 1992 pp.46-55.

[5] Plantinga 1983 p.16

[6] Plantinga 1983 p.40. Wolterstorff, in an extended treatment of natural theology, provides a contrasting perspective. He argues that the project Aquinas is engaged in has much more in common with the tradition of faith seeking understanding. He

self-evident, or known through itself (*per se nota*)" is distinguished from "what is known through another (*per aliud nota*)".[7] Self-evident knowledge is known immediately while the latter, science or *scientia*, is known mediately. Scientific knowledge is known by inference from self-evident knowledge.

> So the basic picture of knowledge is this: we know what we see to be true together with what we can infer from what we see to be true by arguments we can see to be valid.[8]

Concerning the existence of God, Aquinas believes that most Christians believe this by faith but that some Christians may come to know that God exists by inference through the proofs: "so natural knowledge is possible".[9] While most people rely upon faith and trust that God exists, some have time and intellect to come to *know* that God exists. Such knowledge, not being self-evident, must be arrived at through evidence available to us. While Plantinga's exposition of Aquinas is debatable[10] this account does provide a picture of the foundationalist approach to the knowledge of God.

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suggests Locke as a better example of a natural theologian (Wolterstorff 1983). We shall not be concerned here with the accuracy of Plantinga's exposition of Aquinas but will assume its validity in order to draw from it the main characteristics of natural theology.

[7] Plantinga 1983 p.41

[8] Plantinga 1983 p.44

[9] Plantinga 1983 p.44. "I do not in fact hold that the proposition *God exists* is self-evident in itself: for God, we shall argue, is his own existence. But because this is not evident to us the proposition is not self-evident to us. It needs to be made evident by means of things less evident in themselves but more evident to us, namely, God's effects." (Aquinas 1992 p.11)

[10] In particular, Velecky 1994 argues for a different appraisal of the function of the five arguments in the Summa. Velecky demonstrates that the arguments were never intended as proofs but as groundwork so that "Christian and non-Christian Aristotelians could engage in fruitful conversations" (Velecky 1994 p.63). Indeed, Plantinga himself does briefly acknowledge that Aquinas considers belief in the existence of God to be intuitive or immediate knowledge but he writes "It is not entirely easy to see how to fit this suggestion into his generally Aristotelian way of looking at the matter; perhaps here we must see Aquinas as an early Calvinist."

Plantinga writes that according to Aquinas "belief in God is rationally acceptable only if there is evidence for it".[11] He describes this as a religious expression of foundationalism: "some propositions are properly basic and some are not; those that are not are rationally accepted only on the basis of *evidence*, where the evidence must trace back, ultimately to what *is* properly basic".[12] The crucial point about natural theology is that it construes the proposition "God exists" as non-basic and, therefore, as requiring evidential support from the foundations.

Plantinga takes issue with foundationalism not because of its basic twofold division of knowledge but because of the limitations it places on what may count as properly basic belief. Plantinga describes the classical foundationalist conditions for proper basicality as: "A proposition *p* is properly basic for a person *S* if and only if *p* is either self-evident to *S* or incorrigible for *S* or evident to the senses for *S*."[13] He points out the striking limitations that such a condition places upon what may count as basic beliefs and the ultimately self-destructive nature of the condition. Firstly, the condition excludes a number of otherwise groundless beliefs such as "there are enduring physical objects, or that there are persons distinct from myself, or that the world has existed for more than five minutes".[14] There are many things that we believe on the basis of no other beliefs that would not be permitted given such a normative rule. Furthermore, such a rule is itself groundless, having the status of a

(Plantinga 1983 p.47) However, Zagzebski, herself a Roman Catholic, accepts Plantinga's basic interpretation of Aquinas as a natural theologian (Zagzebski 1993 p.3). In contrast see Lindbeck 1965 and Marshall 1989.

[11] Plantinga 1983 p.47

[12] Plantinga 1983 p.48

[13] Plantinga 1983 p.59

[14] Plantinga 1983 p.59. The uses of examples here are very similar to those offered by Malcolm in Chapter 1 (b).

basic belief, and yet neither self-evident nor evident to the senses. So it "is either false or such that in accepting it the foundationalist is violating his epistemic responsibilities".[15]

Plantinga rejects both the necessity of natural theology and the coherence of the foundationalist noetic picture that the project is founded upon. The reason for this is that he argues that belief in the proposition "God exists" has the status of a basic belief. Following an exposition of Calvin he claims that one may believe in the existence of God because the belief is self-evident:

> It is not that such a person is justified or rational in so believing by virtue of having an implicit argument .... No; he does not need any argument for justification or rationality. His belief need not be based on any other proposition at all ....[16]

It is rational to believe in the existence of God without believing it upon the basis of any other propositions whatsoever. Certain religious beliefs, such as belief in God's existence, are as much basic, self-evident beliefs as the belief that 2+2=4 and the existence of an external world.[17] Plantinga is not so much challenging the foundationalist position as extending the range of candidate beliefs for proper basicality.

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[15] Plantinga 1983 p.61. Meynell comments that "one of the more immediate reasons for the present vogue of anti-foundationalism is that the foundations of knowledge proposed by the logical positivists have turned out to be self-destructive." (Meynell 1993 p.85)

[16] Plantinga 1983 p.67

[17] Plantinga develops this point at much greater depth in Plantinga 1990 where he maintains an analogical relationship between our belief in the independent existence of other minds and belief in the existence of God.

We have noted that in accordance with Plantinga's exposition of Aquinas, basic beliefs also provide grounds for inferring other beliefs. All non-basic beliefs are derived, ultimately, from basic beliefs. Therefore, basic beliefs are the presuppositions of any world view:

> What the Reformers held was that a believer is entirely rational, entirely within his epistemic rights, in *starting with* belief in God, in accepting it as basic, and in taking it as premise for arguments to other conclusions.[18]

This description of the knowledge of God presents serious difficulties for apologetics. If belief in God is basic then it is a presupposition of a world view rather than an item of a world view open to debate. Such an extensively revised version of foundationalism shares with Malcolm's non-foundationalism an apparent move to withdraw key presuppositions of religious knowledge from the scope of rational debate. However, Plantinga does not think that this destroys Christian apologetics. Indeed, the continued presence of apologetics in Plantinga's work is lamented by Phillips:

> Yet the *possibility* of defeating arguments is supposed to be forever present. On this view, even if the foundations are not destroyed or shaking, there is always the threat of earthquakes. In Plantinga's epistemology, the trial of faith's rationality never ends for one simple reason: justification never comes to an end either.[19]

However, the apologetic task of the Christian community does follow the assimilative power of the Christian story and the possibility of anomalies in the Christian life. To abandon the apologetic task of Christianity is to abandon its realist intent. We will

[18] Plantinga 1983 p.72
[19] Phillips 1988 p.52

now consider an outline of how he theorises apologetics and how we might pursue this use of apologetics in response to pluralism.

The Great Pumpkin

Plantinga considers the possibility of someone adopting the belief that the Great Pumpkin returns to earth every Halloween as properly basic. His response to this rather odd possibility is indirect. He states that "certain beliefs are properly basic in certain circumstances".[20] What those circumstances are will depend upon a great many other things. In fact, the relevant rational criteria will depend most of all upon the particular community within which one lives and from within which those criteria emerge:

> Accordingly, criteria for proper basicality must be reached from below rather than above; they should not be presented *ex cathedra* but argued to and tested by a relevant set of examples. But there is no reason to assume, in advance, that everyone will agree on the examples.[21]

Plantinga does not state what actual criteria do exclude the Great Pumpkin belief and presumably this is because those criteria would be necessarily Christian criteria and beliefs. The only point he wishes to make in his philosophical writing on this theme is that the construal of certain key Christian beliefs such as the existence of God as basic does not imply that one must give equal credence to any and every claim that a particular belief is properly basic. For while the Christian may agree that belief in God is self-evident:

> Followers of Bertrand Russell and Madelyn Murray O'Hare may disagree;

[20] Plantinga 1983 p.74
[21] Plantinga 1983 p.77

> but how is that relevant? Must my criteria, or those of the Christian community, conform to their examples? Surely not. The Christian community is responsible to *its* set of examples, not theirs.[22]

This claim emphasises the importance of the wider project of developing an Augustinian Christian philosophy that Plantinga is concerned with. To step further into the debate and spell out what the criteria of belief actually are demands a more explicit statement of the Christian faith. For example, in outlining a possible Calvinist rejection of the Great Pumpkin belief he demonstrates the important role of Christian presuppositions:

> God has implanted in us a natural tendency to see his hand in the world around us; the same cannot be said for the Great Pumpkin, there being no Great Pumpkin and no natural tendency to accept beliefs about the Great Pumpkin.[23]

There is something seriously dissatisfying in Plantinga's response. The problem is that he only informs us why a Calvinist Christian would not accept the existence of the Great Pumpkin as a basic belief. This provides no resources for arguing the case with a Great Pumpkinite to whom the objection above would be simply a case of begging the question. The problem is even more pronounced if the belief in question does not concern the Great Pumpkin but the belief that there is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His prophet. Plantinga can provide reasons why the Christian may not accept this belief as basic but he is not clear what reasons might be given to a non-Christian.

Griffiths identifies this problem in Reformed epistemology with his distinction between positive and negative apologetics. Reformed epistemology does permit

[22] Plantinga 1983 p.77
[23] Plantinga 1983 p.78

negative apologetics which is "a series of defensive manoeuvres through which a given community defends its doctrines from external attack".[24] Plantinga's attempt to justify belief in God as properly basic is an example of negative apologetics.[25] He has also made a notable defence of Christianity in relation to the problem of evil through his particular form of the free will defence.[26] However, Griffiths points out that the Reformed position fails to offer a basis for positive apologetics in which a religious community "tries to show that its doctrines are superior, cognitively, epistemically, or ethically, to those of competing religious communities".[27]

Plantinga offers a possible route for the justification of Christian belief that does not require a foundationalist epistemology at least in its Enlightenment form. However, it is not clear that he offers a basis for apologetics in response to the problem of religious pluralism. Perhaps the main reason for this failure is that the focus of Plantinga's concern is the minimal epistemic entitlements of the individual believer. Griffiths helpfully distinguishes between the epistemic obligations of the individual and those of the community to which he or she belongs:

> Many sincere religious believers in all religious communities simply lack the intellectual capacity to construct arguments in support of any of their beliefs, or even to bring their beliefs to full awareness, much less to enter upon the very demanding discipline of positive apologetics.[28]

Therefore, it may well be the case that many believers are justified in adopting the central presuppositions of their faith as properly basic and are not obliged to show

[24] Griffiths 1991 p.60
[25] Notably Plantinga 1990 which is nothing other than a defence of Reformed epistemology in the face of criticisms from Ayer, Flew, Hume and others.
[26] Plantinga 1974 cf. Plantinga 1990 p.115-155
[27] Griffiths 1991 p.60
[28] Griffiths 1991 p.70

how those beliefs are superior to the conflicting beliefs held by those of other traditions. However, Griffiths points out that while his own NOIA principle need not be fulfilled by every individual believer it does need to be engaged in by representative intellectuals: "a community may have epistemic duties that need not be fulfilled by every member of it."[29] If a tradition as a whole is brought into conflict with the beliefs of a rival tradition then it is the tradition as a whole, rather than every individual belonging to it, that must engage in positive apologetics. Griffiths points out that:

> those who argue most strongly for the position that religious believers can fulfil all their epistemic obligations without entering into positive apologetics tend to come from traditions that emphasize the individual at the expense of the community.[30]

An example of this is found in the work of Clark who concludes his case for a Reformed epistemology with the example of the apparent non-foundationalist character of his grandmother's faith in God. Pointing out that she believes without reference to theistic proofs or public evidence, that her faith is typical and that she has no "noetic defects", Clark concludes that it is rational for her to hold belief in God as properly basic.[31] Clark fails to make the distinction between what may be the epistemic obligations of individuals and what may be the epistemic obligations of the wider community to which they belong.[32]

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[29] Griffiths 1991 p.70
[30] Griffiths 1991 p.70
[31] Clark 1990 p.157-158
[32] This also seems to be the point that Aquinas makes in claiming that although an "awareness of God, though neither clear nor specific, exists in practically everyone" nonetheless "Philosophic demonstration adds to this first knowledge of God and betters it, by characterizing him more specifically" (Summa Contra Gentes 3.38 cited in Aquinas 1992 p.9). Christianity needs philosophical expression but not all Christians need be philosophers. Likewise, the Christian positive apologetic need not

The project of developing an Augustinian Christian philosophy is very much in keeping with the attempt to develop a form of Christian apologetics not dependent upon modernism. Reformed epistemology is an attempt to state a theory of knowledge in which the theological context of Christian belief is not made subservient to a neutral mode of enquiry. However, Plantinga's work continues to be haunted by a commitment to a form of foundationalism which hinders his engagement with pluralism.[33] In order to establish principles for a positive apologetic one must clarify the role of revelation as a norm and criterion for the justification of faith. Just such a clarification is found in the recent work of Frame.[34]

The Knowledge of God

Frame begins his account with a discussion of the nature of the knowledge of God. Our knowledge of God is not the product of a special sensory capacity or qualitative mystical experience but is a result of the covenant relationship God makes with His people:[35]

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be one that all Christians are expert in presenting.

[33] This is reflected in the lack of serious engagement with pluralism in the Plantinga corpus. His continued use of the Pumpkinite objection is a crass example given the plurality of major, serious religious world views.

[34] Especially Frame 1987 (See also Frame 1994). We will not outline the "perspectivist" framework Frame uses. It is integral to his thesis that there are three perspectives on knowledge: the normative, the situational and the existential. Through this framework he seeks to integrate approaches to epistemology and apologetics otherwise seen as rival. Consideration of this schema is not necessary in order to outline the broader model of apologetics that he offers.

[35] Frame criticises Plantinga for not being sufficiently 'theological' in his philosophy. No doubt the Reformed epistemologists would share the content of Frame's theological commitments but he points out that this "has not always been evident in their writings." (Frame 1987 p.383) Plantinga fails to clarify the relationship between a basic belief and the narrative of scripture.

> Knowing is a process that is *subject* to God's Lordship. Like all other processes, human knowledge is under God's control, subject to his authority, and exposed to his presence. Thus God is involved in our knowing, just as He is involved in all things we know about. The process of knowing itself, apart from any information gained by it, is a revelation of God.[36]

Prior to considering an epistemology of religious knowledge it is necessary to formulate a doctrine of revelation because the very possibility of knowing is predicated on the initiative of God in self-revelation. Therefore, knowledge is not a matter of our striving to know God and exercising our cognitive faculties correctly in order to access Him. Rather, knowledge of God depends upon His revelatory activity in disclosure to us. Frame examines the basic Biblical material on the knowledge of God in order to arrive at the basic theme of Lordship. The primary revelation of God is His being Lord over all creation. It is this Lord who makes the covenant with us. Entering into this relationship within the covenant of the Sovereign Lord is the only starting point for the knowledge of God and, indeed, the proper knowledge of anything.

Two important implications follow this "epistemology". The first is that human language is suitable for God-talk. It presents no barrier to God's revelation and so does not need de-mythologisation or to be relativised as limited, human knowledge.

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[36] Frame 1987 p.41-42. That revelation of God is described as "The Word of God", itself a term common in scripture. Frame identifies the Word of God with the Bible as the basic presupposition of the Christian faith. This is problematic because it does beg certain questions. Helm identifies this kind of presuppositionalism as one that presupposes not only the truth of the Bible but its meaning as well (Helm 1992 p.147). There is no space here to discuss these issues but we take the Word of God to identify the narrative of Scripture as it is focused in the incarnation as the Word become flesh. We leave aside the issue of the relationship between text and revelation, its inerrancy or infallibility and the question of the canon of scripture. See Carson and Woodbridge 1986.

The second implication is that the distinction between "fact" and "interpretation" is false. We shall consider these implications in turn.

Human language is capable of God-talk because it is itself based on God's created order rather than simply being a product of human intellectual progress:

> A Christian epistemology will reject the premise that human language necessarily refers primarily to finite reality, because this premise is based on what we have called a non-Christian view of transcendence - that God is not clearly revealed in creation.[37]

Indeed, Frame argues that human language is primarily about God. It is not firstly about neutral, natural "facts" with only a secondary or analogical application to supposed supernatural reality. All reality is God's creation and, therefore, even to talk about a table is, for the Christian, to use religious language. There simply is no natural/religious language dichotomy sustainable in the light of the Biblical narrative. There is no basis for a hierarchical model of language use in which God-talk can be classed as non-factual. This leads us to the second implication that we cannot consistently maintain a distinction between fact and interpretation.

The problem for Christians who adopts this distinction is that they have immediately relativised the significance of revelation (one interpretation among many) and created a locus of authority outside of the Word of God (facts). This has been the victory of modernism in its push to establish the autonomy of human knowledge:

> The idea of 'brute fact' is an invention to furnish us with a criterion of truth other than God's revelation. Yet, as with all other such substitutes, it cannot even be

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[37] Frame 1987 p.35

> made intelligible. A 'fact' devoid of any normative interpretation would be a fact without meaning, without characteristics - in short, a nothing.[38]

It is a simple tautology to affirm that all knowledge is interpretation. There are no 'facts' accessible to us without the exercise of interpretation. This does not mean that we are locked up without access to 'reality'. This is because reality is itself an interpreted-fact and the issue is whether our reality is *true reality*. The answer to this question can only be settled by appeal to some standard or authority for knowledge. The only Christian standard is God's self-revelation:

> The desire for a 'fact' totally devoid of human interpretation that can serve as an authoritative criterion for all interpretations is a non-Christian desire, a desire to substitute some other authority for the Word of God.[39]

Given the primacy of God's self-revelation in justification there are important difficulties in developing a Christian apologetic. However, according to Frame epistemology is itself part of the problem, not part of the answer. The justification of belief is a much more organic challenge depending on who is asking the question, who is answering and so on. As we have already noted, there is an important distinction between the extent to which an individual Christian need provide reasons for belief and the extent to which the Church is responsible to provide an apologetic for Christianity. In the case of individuals, a whole host of related factors will shape what might count as justification and what might be the best way of presenting an apologetic for Christianity to unbelievers:

> Sometimes philosophers seem to be telling us that we cannot have any justified belief unless we have a fully articulated *philosophy* of belief, an epistemology. But surely that, too, is wrong. If we must be able to give a reason for every

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[38] Frame 1987 p.71
[39] Frame 1987 pp.71-72

> belief, then we must be able to give a reason for every reason, and so the process of justification would require infinite chains of reasoning. Justification would be a hopeless task.[40]

Frame indicates how misleading a philosophical treatment of theological questions can sometimes be. To question whether God's existence can be proven cannot be discussed in isolation from the substantive question of whether God exists which in turn depends upon a context in which there is knowledge of God (revelation). To ask "Does God exist?" ought to be a question that is framed in the context of a particular tradition and a particular God. The danger of an epistemological approach to apologetics is that it empties revelation of its specific theological content in favour of a more general philosophical content. In contrast, Frame argues that the Word of God is the basic presupposition of all Christian 'epistemology'. It is a presupposition that should be acknowledged by Christians when in apologetic encounter. Therefore, Frame defines apologetics as a branch of theology, not philosophy:

> Apologetics may be defined as the application of Scripture to unbelief and as such may be seen as a subdivision of theology. It is important to understand that that definition makes apologetics a part of theology, not a 'neutral basis' for it. Too often writers on such matters have assumed that the work of the apologist is to reason with the unbeliever, using criteria and presuppositions that are acceptable both to belief and unbelief.[41]

Because there is no autonomy or neutrality in apologetics it cannot be a bare philosophical epistemology that provides the grounds for apologetic encounter. The obvious attraction of such a possibility is that it would seem to provide a neutral methodology for solving conflicting truth claims. However, as we have clearly displayed in the work of Hick, once this step is taken the locus of authority shifts from

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[40] Frame 1987 p.105
[41] Frame 1987 p.87

the Christian revelation to somewhere else. In the case of Hick it shifts to an Enlightenment epistemology. The result is that Christianity cannot have privileged access to truth. Instead, the only religion permitted this status is the great religion of the Enlightenment: Kant's religion within the limits of reason alone. In contrast, Frame retains the locus of authority in the Word of God - the revealed narrative at the heart of Christian theology. Therefore, even the methodology of apologetics will be constrained by this framework. It will not be neutral but properly biased toward the truth and reality which is the content of revelation. The purpose of apologetics is now to be construed as the act of telling the story of God's dealings with His creation in a persuasive way. The epistemological approach to apologetics focuses attention on piecemeal elements of Christianity (the existence of God, the problem of evil and so forth) whereas the narrative approach relates all particular questions to the context in which they have their meaning and substance. Obviously, questions must be answered, but the answers given by the Christian apologist will not assume that they may be answered without appeal to the authority and context of the Word of God. We shall close our discussion by considering the relationship of narrative to apologetics.

(d) Apologetics and Storytelling

Apologetics Without Story

Given the objections we have made to foundationalism various difficulties arise for the possibility of apologetics. If it were possible to identify tradition transcending principles that allow one to distinguish between words about reality and reality "itself" or, at least, truth conditions for such claims about reality then they would seem to provide a basis for the requirements of Griffiths' NOIA principle and engagement with pluralism. If there are no tradition transcending principles then apologetics can develop no clear connection or neutral principles between religions. However, this form of foundationalism relies upon the distinction between reality-as-interpreted and reality-as-it-is. We have seen that this distinction underlies the work of Hick and the modernist tradition of which he is a part. The distinction gives rise to many more problems than it solves. Apart from internal difficulties, it relativises the significance of theological reflection and rules out the possibility of divine revelation. The key advantage of the foundationalist claim for apologetics is that it provides a basis for debate between religions without which the role of the Christian apologist can only be to tell the Christian story. We may repeat the narrative that has formed the Christian tradition to those who will listen but there is no place for defending that narrative from objections or persuading non-believers that they should come to see the story as their own story too.

We have already referred to two Christian apologists who dispense, in different ways, with classical foundationalism.[1] It is not clear that after foundationalism they must dispense with apologetics entirely in favour of storytelling alone. The choice is not

[1] Plantinga and Frame in Chapter 6 (c).

between foundationalism or the ant-realist rejection of apologetics. A fruitful approach to resolving this dilemma may be gained from considering further the role of narrative and metaphor in apologetics. In order to do so we shall first return to the work of MacIntyre. We have seen that his work, in contrast to modernism, invests great value in the role of a tradition shaping the thought forms of communities. We will now see that to prize tradition is not to devalue some sense of rational dispute between rival traditions and its attendant notion of realism.

Tradition and Truth

If traditions are self-contained contexts of intellectual enquiry constituted by particular beliefs and governed by tradition specific senses of rational and moral appraisal then it seems to follow that not only are traditions incompatible they are also incomparable.[2] No comparison may be made between them and so even the claim that traditions are incompatible cannot be substantiated. This is the problem of commensurability.[3] If the charge is correct then MacIntyre's entire thesis is based on an incoherence. His attempt to describe a narrative of the virtues in terms of 'rival' traditions assumes some form of commensurability. If his argument concludes that traditions are incommensurable then the very attempt to produce such a narrative cannot be valid. However, MacIntyre denies such an implication through his appeal to 'shared' standards and the possibility of 'translation'.[4] These are important concepts which he considers carefully.

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[2] Mason 1994 argues that MacIntyre is inconsistent on this point. For further discussion see Markham 1991.

[3] A useful discussion of commensurability is found in Burrows "Commensurability and Ambiguity" in Cohn-Sherbok 1992. He demonstrates the commensurable terms, such as those associated with liberation theology, may become a part of traditions in the future as they accommodate new issues but they are problematic if read back into the histories of traditions as if shared, comparable concepts had always existed.

[4] This discussion parallels that of Lindbeck's concept of assimilative power. Lindbeck

Though all reasoning and description occur from the vantage point of a particular tradition, it "does not follow that what is said from within one tradition cannot be heard or overheard by those in another."[5] The possibility of one tradition overhearing another relies upon some form of common standards or meanings held by practitioners of both traditions. In practice this possibility is a commonplace reality: "Traditions which differ in the most radical way over certain subject matters may in respect of others share beliefs, images and texts."[6] The key word for MacIntyre's analysis seems to be "share". He does not have any need to resort to an elusive neutral language or set of standards in order to secure the possibility of translation. The shared standards that already overlap among pre-existing traditions provide all the tools necessary to facilitate translation.[7]

What those shared standards might be will vary in different dialogue situations.[8] The points of overlap between Christians and Muslims will be substantially different than those between Christians and Buddhists. In fact, in the latter case, the points of overlap that are of direct religious significance may be few indeed. The less that is shared, the more difficult the work of translation. In the case of the traditions with

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prefers the term redescription to translation: "Intratextual theology redescribes reality within the scriptural framework rather than translating Scripture into extrascriptural categories." (Lindbeck 1984 p.118). This is a matter of the "direction of the interpretative activity" (Marshall 1990b p.74). In MacIntyre's terminology we might say that the world is being "translated" into scripture rather than scripture into the world. An account of postliberal apologetics relying on "wide reflective equilibrium" as a basis for redescription is found in Kamitsuka 1996.

[5] MacIntyre 1988 p.350

[6] MacIntyre 1988 p.350

[7] Apczynski 1992 p.46

[8] Mavrodes gives theoretical consideration to a similar idea in terms of 'person-relative' criteria (Mavrodes 1970).

which MacIntyre is primarily concerned they "agree in according a certain authority to logic both in their theory and in their practice."[9] Such an agreement makes the categorisation of disagreement a relatively straightforward affair. Insofar as there exist significant areas of agreement, MacIntyre gives the examples of "texts, modes of evaluation, whole practices, such as games, crafts and sciences", it will follow that "translation will generally be able to proceed almost entirely by same-saying."[10]

However, traditions may have little in common with each other and, insofar as this is the case, translation will be significantly more problematic. Translation may then be, at best, "more difficult and cumbrous" but, at worst, "the more possibilities of untranslatability will seem to threaten."[11] It must be a hypothetical possibility that traditions may have nothing in common and be strictly incommensurable. However, this 'threat' is of much less significance than it may first appear because traditions that are strictly incommensurable cannot be characterised as rival. Nothing could be compared or contrasted as competing claims and it follows that there is no contest to be settled, no rivalry to resolve. This potential threat can neither be solved nor formulated other than as a formal, logical possibility. Concerning the reality of religious pluralism the various traditions do seem to share enough overlap of the kind discussed by MacIntyre to facilitate both comparison and apologetics.

It is also claimed that the denial of foundationalism entails anti-realism or ontological relativism. MacIntyre explicitly distances his own work from these implications. Without identifying the representative objectors he labels the relevant positions as the "relativist" and "perspectivist" challenges:

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[9] MacIntyre 1988 p.351
[10] MacIntyre 1988 p.387
[11] MacIntyre 1988 p.387

> The relativist challenge rests upon a denial that rational debate between and rational choice among rival traditions is possible; the perspectivist challenge puts in question the possibility of making truth-claims from within any one tradition.[12]

It might be argued that these positions are implied by MacIntyre's denial that there is a neutral standing ground for moral and intellectual enquiry. Without that neutral ground there are, firstly, no reasons for choosing one tradition over another and, secondly, no sense that can be made of any claims to universal validity regarding moral prescription or ontological description. Relativism emphasises the first problem while perspectivism emphasises the second. Most often these two problems are run together as aspects of the same challenge. These objections share the assumption that terms like 'truth' or 'realism' retain a neutral mode of discourse and, in its place, true anti-foundationalism will claim that alternative traditions should be understood as "very different, complementary perspectives for envisaging the realities about which they speak to us".[13]

It is understood that traditions are in a constant change of development and yet, in order to retain identity, always continue a core element of defining belief and practice. One of the processes that a tradition will continually engage in is that of testing the correspondence of defining beliefs to the reality in which the tradition claims to live, move and have its being. MacIntyre points out that the development of a tradition always leaves it open to the possibility that a "radical discrepancy" may emerge

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[12] MacIntyre 1988 p.352

[13] MacIntyre 1988 p.352. This description of the objection is similar to the kind of objection Hick would mount but the similarity is superficial. An element of perspectivism is an important part of Hick's work but his work relies on entirely different theoretical foundations. Hick, *contra* perspectivism, retains the realist, truth-claiming status of key religious beliefs.

between "what the mind then judged and believed and reality as now perceived. classified and understood".[14] He describes this as a retrospective form of the correspondence theory of truth. Only retrospectively is one able to judge that beliefs of the past fail to correspond to the world. This presentation of correspondence carefully avoids developing another form of Enlightenment foundationalism. Truth is not a perspective outside all traditions through which all traditions may be judged. Truth and error can only be adopted and recognised as truth or error from within a tradition of enquiry. MacIntyre dismisses the notion of "facts" as a seventeenth century invention.[15] Facts are not "things" like wigs or telescopes, he argues, but, with reference to its derivation from the Latin term, more like occasions or events. They only exist in terms of present traditions of enquiry. This description of truth leads MacIntyre to maintain a certain type of realist claim:

> One of the great originating insights of tradition-constituted enquiries is that false beliefs and false judgments represent a failure of the mind, not of its objects. It is the mind which stands in need of correction. Those realities which mind encounters reveal themselves as they are, the presented, the manifest, the unhidden.[16]

The assumption upon which this originating insight must rest is that there is a reality with which alternative or rival traditions deal. When a belief is found to have failed (retrospectively) to correspond with reality, then that constitutes a failure of the mind and not of reality itself.[17] Some form of realism must be a part of apologetics.

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[14] MacIntyre 1988 p.356
[15] MacIntyre 1988 p.357
[16] MacIntyre 1988 p.357
[17] The concept of a tradition of enquiry is not dissimilar to Wittgenstein's notion of a language game. The charge of incommensurability is made against Wittgenstein on this point. In Wittgenstein's early work he argued for a picture-theory of language similar to that argued for by Hick (Wittgenstein 1961 (1922) p.22). His later abandonment of this theory followed his key insight that language must be understood

Disagreement assumes that more is at issue than different tastes or opinions. The very fact of disagreements highlights the implicit assumption that what we understand to be reality is not just 'reality for us' but reality as it really is.[18]

Narrative and Truth

We have already seen reason to believe that metaphor does give us access to reality.[19] The extension of this claim is the affirmation that tradition, as a community shaped by narrative, informs us about and enables us to live in reality. This highlights a key distinction between two forms of non-foundationalism. This distinction may be outlined with references to two alternative opinions regarding the implications of the structural role of narrative in knowledge.

in terms of the wider activity or form of life in which it must be understood to operate (Wittgenstein 1958 pp.8-9, 48). Language cannot be properly understood in isolation from the types of activity of which it is a part. Hence, meaning depends upon the way in which words are being used and not on formal logical connections between names and objective reality. However, this need not imply the anti-realist position. Haymes point out that "a language-game is both continuous and discontinuous with other language-games." (Haymes 1988 p.5 see also Kerr 1989) There are connections, perhaps analogous, between words used in one setting and words used in another. Sometimes the theme of continuity becomes too dominant in a theology of religions and this creates the illusion that there is no radical discontinuity between traditions. For a striking example of this in the case of scripture see Smith 1993 and the discussion in Sinkinson 1994 and Sinkinson 1995b.

[18] Trigg argues these points along with his claim that communication itself assumes some form of realism in Trigg 1973 p.153ff.

[19] Chapter 5 (d). Johnson develops the connections between the need to think in metaphors and the narrative structure of all human thinking. He makes the strong claim that *all* thinking and reasoning is shaped by narrative without adopting anti-realism: "because there are shared bases for metaphors within a culture, and even across cultures .... some metaphors appear to be grounded in universal bodily experiences." (Johnson 1993 p.196)

Loughlin identifies this distinction in terms of textualist and narrativist theologians.[20] Textualism rules out apologetics because it rules out the realist assumption that there is something other than the system of signs we describe as language. Loughlin describes the textualist approach to meaning as simply the drifting from one word to the next as we define words with other words and, in this way, "Meaning is always one word away".[21] According to the textualist, the significance of the priority given to narrative for Christianity is that 'text' or words take priority over God and his self-disclosure: "God is wholly inside language, make-believe like everything else; God is language."[22] In contrast to the textualist case is the narrativist one. The narrativist agrees that it is a narrative, a story, that defines reality, self, God and so on. However, the narrativist resists the textualist desire to make textualism itself the master narrative. Rather, it is the Christian story that is the master narrative. It defines reality, self, God and so on and "teaches that really there is nothing whatsoever beyond God's story. It is the love of God that goes all the way down, really."[23] Loughlin argues that accepting the nature of the Christian life and witness as fundamentally shaped by narrative is not to concede that such life and witness is just words or simply make believe. However, he is concerned to distance narrativism from modernity's preoccupation with foundations and epistemological realism. He points out that "Christian truth has never been a matter of matching stories against reality. It has always been a case of matching stories against the truth: Jesus Christ."[24] Loughlin is avoiding a neutral term like "reality" in favour of the theologically informed term "truth". Truth is not reality-as-it-is in contrast to reality-as-interpreted. Truth,

[20] Loughlin 1996a p.10 Examples of the former include Cupitt and of the latter, Lindbeck.
[21] Loughlin 1996a p.13
[22] Loughlin 1996a p.16
[23] Loughlin 1996a p.17
[24] Loughlin 1996a p.23

according to the Christian narrative, is revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Therefore, He is the ultimate statement of Reality. This claim leaves open the question of what role, if any, is left for apologetics. Loughlin is clear that Christianity cannot be relativised in the light of pluralism and his outline for verbal encounter is one of storytelling rather than apologetics:

> The Christian story comes first. It is the measure of all other stories. Deciding on its truthfulness is a matter of judging how good a story it is, and that .... is at least a matter of judging how well the story is told by its tellers.[25]

This criterion for the truth of Christianity may seem very different from the proposed NOIA principle with which we have developed our understanding of apologetics. However, Loughlin must not be understood as reverting to the textualist case at this point. He remains a narrativist and that means that the story does absorb the world and so the telling of the story means the describing of the world in which our non-Christian friends are also characters in the plot. Telling God's story is not simply talking at those who listen; it also involves presenting the internal rationality of the story and applying the story to apparent anomalies or objections. Loughlin notes approvingly the kind of apologetics offered by Barth and Frei. The world narrated by the Bible is "the one common world" for Frei who also presents Barth as one who "uses exegesis, ethics and *ad hoc* apologetics, in order to show how the biblical world is our world."[26] Barth is more normally understood to be hostile to the practice of apologetics.[27] Loughlin finds a role for apologetics in keeping with Barth because he

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[25] Loughlin 1996a p.161

[26] Loughlin 1996a p.38 '*ad hoc* apologetics' is defined by Hunsinger as "essentially a matter of clarifying the meaning rather than demonstrating the truth of a particular claim or set of claims" (cited in Loughlin 1996a p.38 n.29).

[27] Pinnock describes Barth as a voluntarist with regard to faith because "The gospel has to be accepted or rejected by an act of the will (faith), and nothing can be said to justify the truth-claims it makes by standard apologetic reasoning." (Pinnock 1986

sees the service of apologetics as one of explanation rather than justification. Certainly, this account of apologetics would seem more in keeping with the non-foundationalist proposals we have considered. However, we will now return to Frame's work in order to present the case for apologetics to include the role of justification. However, the form of justification we shall suggest is one that is subsumed within the role of explanation or telling the story.[28]

Apologetics and Truth

Frame rejects the notion of neutral enquiry in favour of an epistemology and apologetic arising from the Biblical narrative. This implies that apologetics will primarily involve explaining the story to those who do not believe. However, the process of the explanation includes the presentation of reasons. In considering the historicity of the resurrection and its use in foundationalist apologetics Frame willingly concedes:

> It is quite proper to point out that the resurrection of Christ is as well attested as any other historical fact. It is legitimate to ask why the apostles were willing to die for the belief that Christ had risen. It is legitimate to examine the alternative (unbelieving) explanations of the resurrection reports and to show how implausible they are. Using those sorts of arguments does not, in itself, compromise our biblical presuppositions. Indeed, though the evidentialists themselves would not grant this point, those arguments presuppose a Christian world view - a world of order, logic and value. They are intelligible only within the "broad circle" of Christian argument.[29]

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p.162) Pinnock argues that the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about faith and the wisdom of human reasoning are not incompatible as Barth would claim.

[28] Oakes distinguishes between pure and impure narratology. Pure narratology is textualist but impure narratology claims that "narrative is inherently 'impure' because it makes a referential claim." (Oakes 1992 p.45) This distinction is parallel to that made by Loughlin though he would define "referential" in Christological terms. Our use of narrative here is impure and narrativist. Referential claims are at stake.

[29] Frame 1987 p.353

Frame's reference to circular argument is helpful at this point because it brings together the themes of narrative and apologetics. An obvious objection to this apologetic case is that it becomes mere circular argument: presupposing what it seeks to prove. Frame distinguishes between narrow and broad circular arguments.[30] A narrow or vicious circular argument states something like "The Christian narrative is true because it claims to be true". Such an argument is tautologous and of no value in apologetics. However, a broad circular argument is one that takes into account as much 'data' as possible. This means that a good apologetic will describe features of life, the world and history and in that sense will be a case of telling God's story. The process of storytelling includes the redescribing of listeners within the terms of the narrative and the presentation of evidence that the narrative does reveal the world. All the facts, evidences and proofs that the Christian apologist offers will presuppose the Christian narrative to be not *a* world view but *the* world view.

Conclusion

At least two objections remain. The first is that such circularity is unfair as it grants to Christians a kind of non-rationalism it denies to anyone else. The second is that it creates a situation where dialogue can only be one way: a basis for telling the Christian story but not for hearing any others. We will conclude by offering a response to these objections.

Non-foundationalist apologetics does not permit circularity for Christian argument while demanding foundations for non-Christian beliefs. The non-foundationalist claim is a claim about the nature of knowledge itself. All apologetic will be circular in

[30] Frame 1987 p.131

this important sense.[31] This is because ultimate loyalties are at stake. There is no neutral ground upon which to stand and analyse the pluralist world. If Christian apologetics involves circularity at this point then so too does any other attempt to provide reasons for ultimate beliefs. The work of MacIntyre has been to present the role of tradition and community in all forms of enquiry - even in those which deny its place.

The question of how the Christian apologist is to listen to rival stories returns us to the question of dialogue and pluralism which we touched in our introduction to apologetics.[32] It has not been our argument here that apologetics is to be equated with dialogue. It is MacIntyre's concept of translation that provides the necessary background to apologetics and this is close to the work of dialogue. Indeed, translation "may have made possible a dialectical interchange between the two rival standpoints, out of which there may emerge a discovery of common standards, standards hitherto presupposed, but never before made articulate."[33] Translation involves listening and hearing in order to realise as fair as possible an understanding of one tradition by another. This is the important role of dialogue and a necessary prerequisite of dialogue. However, the conception of apologetics we have outlined has given rise to some significant complications for dialogue. Given the abandonment of foundationalism there must also be an abandonment of the idea that dialogue draws those of traditions closer together into a tradition-less space. Milbank has given a striking expression of this implication:

> As regards the general furtherance of the critical understanding of discourses (the

[31] Frame 1987 p.130
[32] Chapter 1 (a)
[33] MacIntyre 1994 p.297

> minimum that religions can truly share in common) it will be better to replace "dialogue" with "mutual suspicion." As regards Christian theology and practice, we should simply pursue further the ecclesial project of securing harmony through difference and a continuous historical conversation not bound by the Socratic constraints of dialogue around a neutral common topic.[34]

To replace 'dialogue' with 'mutual suspicion' is simply a more honest way of proceeding. Hick's attempt to provide a religious interpretation of religion is a covert application of a sceptic world view to the world's religious traditions. Christian apologetics is an overt application of the Christian world view to those traditions. This latter option more clearly provokes mutual suspicion than the former option and that is understood to be a great advantage for establishing meaningful relationships between religious communities.

[34] Milbank 1990b p.190

Conclusion

Hick develops an apologetic for Christianity on a foundationalist epistemology. His defence of the rationality of faith is based upon the quality of religious experience he claims lies at the heart of religion. Underlying distinctive religious knowledge is a universal natural knowledge and a more general moral awareness. These former levels of knowledge are necessarily prior to religious awareness. Given this epistemology it is not difficult for Hick to make modifications which provide a basis for his pluralist hypothesis. His apologetic for Christianity has never relied upon any distinctive aspect of Christianity. Instead, it is an apologetic reliant on neutral categories of knowledge and behaviour which he assumes to be appropriate to all people.

Hick's apologetic employs an analysis of knowledge in keeping with the movement known as the Enlightenment. According to this tradition, knowledge is separable from the community in which one exercises that knowledge. Therefore, those knowledge claims must be justified not by appeal to a broad range of tradition specific considerations but by personal factors which are universally applicable. For this reason the criteria compel Hick to adopt a pluralist position. This is because by these criteria no tradition may be privileged above any other. Instead all are subject to the same transcendental factors.

The methodology utilised by Hick is part of a wider movement that has inspired a great deal of Christian apologetics. Much of that apologetic enterprise has been concerned with the justification of the historic Christian position though the

methodology itself is compatible with very different positions.[1] However, in our analysis of Hick we have noted a range of failings implicit in this methodology. These failures may be summarised in terms of three inter-related objections. The first concerns the ambiguity of the universe as an assumed truth which must precede religious belief.[2] We have had reason to note the incoherence of Hick's attempt to state this precedence within Christian theology.[3] The very positing of this assumption involves Hick in relativising Christian faith in favour of a western Sceptic position. The second objection concerns the theoretical framework for religious knowledge in an ambiguous universe. That framework is strictly dualist in its absolute separation of the unknown reality from human interpretative faculties.[4] That separation rules out any true knowledge of God known either through human speculation or divine revelation.[5] The third objection concerns the role of language, metaphor and narrative in religious knowledge.[6] Hick's dualism is also apparent here. Because he distinguishes the foundational role of experience and universal religious factors he must relegate language use to the secondary or dependent level of cultural garb. The strategy fails to take into account the formative sense in which narrative is embedded in tradition and shapes our very way of thinking and reasoning.

In contrast we have argued that it is possible to develop an apologetic on the basis of the postliberal account. The situation of rationality within tradition and narrative does

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[1] This is striking in the comparison of Netland and Ward in Chapter 1 (d).
[2] The argument of Chapter 3.
[3] In particular this incoherence is apparent with the distinction between the religious ambiguity of the universe for us and the lack of ambiguity for the great saints of religious history. See Chapter 3 (b).
[4] The argument of Chapter 4.
[5] The consequences of this step for any doctrine of revelation are considered in Chapter 6 (a).
[6] The argument of Chapter 5.

not spell the end of apologetic encounter. Indeed, in an age of pluralism it permits an approach to other religions that does not demand their reduction into Enlightenment categories of thought as we find with the pluralist hypothesis of Hick. Instead, non-foundational apologetics are able to recognise the differences and pursue apologetics on the basis that those differences are matters of great significance and not optional embellishments.

Hick's work has been developed in line with his conviction that a pluralist society demands tolerance and respect among the practitioners of the world religions. The purpose of this thesis is not to undermine this conviction but to provide an alternative basis for it. Indeed, it is our concern that to require a commitment to agreement (the pluralist hypothesis) in order to live in tolerance and respect is to ask too much of the faithful believers in any religious tradition.[7] The apologetic strategy outlined here does provide compelling grounds to listen carefully to rival traditions, respect their contrary rationalities and tell God's story in a way that will be meaningful to them. When "*apologeomai*" is used in First Peter this is certainly what is intended:

> Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.[8]

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[7] Griffiths and Lewis point out how wrong Hick's demand is (Griffiths and Lewis 1983 p.77)

[8] 1 Peter 3:15-16. New International Version.

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The following bibliography is not intended to be an exhaustive account of Hick's texts but only a compilation of those relevant to this thesis. A fuller bibliography up to 1986 is to be found in D'Costa 1987 and a useful bibliography of critical literature on Hick is to be found in Hick 1995.

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